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My Work and My Critics

By FRANCOIS MAURIAC

NOW that *The Loved and the Unloved* is about to be published, I feel much the same anxiety as I did, thirty years ago, whenever one of my books appeared. I am afraid, not so much that I may shock, as disconcert, those of my readers who share with me a religious outlook. The misunderstanding to which I refer may arise in circumstances which have nothing to do with the publication of a novel. For instance, a member of one of the Religious Orders wrote to me that *La Table Ronde* had disappointed him. The fact that my name appeared at the head of the list of those responsible for its editorial policy, had decided him to read the periodical, and, no doubt, to recommend it to the young men in his charge. This Father thought it strange that I should devote so much time to so *useless* a production. This is an excellent example of the type of misunderstanding to which I have referred. For this member of a Religious Order, and even for a simple layman, provided he be sufficiently fervent, to write means to serve. That the artist should have no concern beyond painting to the best of his ability, and placing what he has painted, in the best possible light, is something that a man of apostolic calling finds it more than usually difficult to understand.

There do, I need hardly point out, exist members of Religious Orders who have given much thought to the problems inherent in the act of literary creation. They would most certainly admit that the novelist must be constantly on his guard against trying to *prove* anything. They realize that his duty is to make the most of his own peculiar vision of human life and human persons. It remains true, however, that if the world which the Christian novelist portrays is noticeably denuded of Grace, that if God seems to be absent from it, the pious critic has a perfect right to hold that the work in question may fairly be used in evidence against its author.

As a result of having had, recently, to go through the proofs of a Collected Edition of my works, I have been compelled to re-read all of them, and it has been borne in on me that though, quite often, Grace does "break in," it has tended to do so less and less as I have grown older. In *The Weakling* it makes an appearance only in the final pages, and in *The Loved and the Unloved* the reader is not told until the very last sentence, almost the very last word, that one of my characters is moving towards God. All the same, that "someone" waiting for Nicolas Plassac where the road crosses the Leyrot is God. But before that meeting could take place I had first to destroy the idol—Gilles

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Calone. It was necessary that Nicolas should be detached from appearance, from his own false image of himself. Galigai makes him realize that the lusts of the flesh are productive of intense unhappiness, that he is no less capable of cruelty than other men, and that he has never really loved anyone but God. The world I have described is the world as it appears to Nicolas when the scales fall from his eyes.

The picture I have painted is indeed black. It shows mankind as warped, as showing to the world a mask fixed in a hard and hateful grimace. It shows humanity untouched by Grace. In favor of whom, or of what, can such a portrait bear witness? That question sums up the critical attitude of the Christian. What I sought to express was precisely those shards and fragments of life as it is lived in a half dead provincial town, and from which Nicolas separates himself at God's call. When I started the book I did not know that this was my intention. The artist stresses this or that characteristic almost unconsciously and in obedience to his creative instinct. He may even distort his material the better to give form and substance to those feelings of pity and horror which, since his earliest years, he has felt when confronted by certain persons and certain lives. To the over-life-size figures whom, as a sickly child, I saw, noted and fixed in my mind, now, grown to maturity, and as an old man, I have given significance. The social prejudices and priorities obtaining among the "insects" of a country society, would be matter only for mockery and raillery, were it not for the fact that there, as elsewhere, there, perhaps, more than elsewhere, the secret drama of sexual desire which is near neighbor to disgust, finds its free development.

I might well have called *The Loved and the Unloved—Desire and Disgust*. The subject of the book is one aspect of that hatred between the sexes which is rarely studied because, in the first place, it is something upon which we do not like to dwell, and because mutual love will always be a more pleasing spectacle to human beings so long as they continue to feel a need for love. I have not, in *The Loved and the Unloved*, deprived the reader of that spectacle. The book is, among other things, the story of a happy pair of lovers. But, that the true theme may be made to stand out more clearly it does treat also of the repulsion felt by a young man pursued by an "amazon" who is convinced that, even in love, the force of sheer determination, of sheer will-power, can be made to triumph. That a young man, not naturally inclined to vice, should be satisfied with a feeling of friendship—or rather, of the emotion that falls half way between friendship and love—inspired in him by a childhood's companion, so completely as to let it absorb his whole capacity for sentimental devotion, is something that the reader of *The Loved and the Unloved* may find it hard to accept. He may be led to assume the worst of this Hippolytus who is without an Aricia. But if he does so he will, in my opinion, be wrong.

MY WORK AND MY CRITICS

But, to return to the main point at issue. My priestly correspondent will find here fresh reason to wonder what the results of my labors amount to, what good they will do, spiritually, to those who read them, and how I can reconcile so distorted a view of the human animal with the faith I claim to have in his vocation of sanctity. It would be easy for me to get out of the difficulty by arguing as I have done on more than one occasion, during the last forty years. I might point out that evil is a reality in this world of ours, that the people I set out to paint are fallen creatures, tainted from birth, that I have done no more than provide a dramatic illustration of what a Bossuet and a Bourdaloue have already denounced, that no artist should force his talent, and that mine does not easily breathe the air of sublimity.

This is all perfectly true, but it does not really answer the objections put forward by the priest or the pious layman, both of whom will retort at once by saying that, even at the risk of forcing my talent, I ought to have devoted a final chapter to showing the victory of Grace in Nicolas. They cannot be expected, they will say, to take my word for its occurrence. It is one thing, they will declare, to denounce the vices of mankind from the pulpit in order to combat them, and quite another to display those vices, not, indeed, with the purposes of a work of art which shall be judged as an end in itself. For there, in my opinion—leaving aside the Jansenist contention that all depicting of human passions is criminal—lies the real sin which no Christian artist can avoid who does not manifestly employ his gifts in the interests of his Faith. The work which is *merely* an end in itself becomes an idol, on whose altar the artist will sacrifice everything, even if that everything shall include, as with Proust it did, life itself. But, as I myself have often pleaded, the work of art is of service to mankind simply because it does not seek deliberately to "serve." Do I really believe that? Let me confess at once that the work of art tends much more frequently to distort than to instruct. For the creative writer to pretend that he helps us to an understanding of mankind by painting a picture in dark and extravagant colors, is sheer hypocrisy. Living persons are never like the characters of fiction. The people presented in novels or on the stage are a race apart. They in no way instruct us about ourselves, or, at least, not usefully, in the first place because these invented creatures are conditioned and circumstanced by the author, in the second, because, no matter how complex they may be, they inevitably express some tendency, some passion, or some vice, and are, to that extent, detached from the human context. We have most of us had experience of misers and hypocrites, but we have none of us ever met a Tartuffe, a Harpagon or a Grandet. There is a planet Balzac, a planet Dostoevsky, inhabited by monsters with the faces of men and women. They are just as much, perhaps more, alive and less ephemeral than the inhabitants of our planet Earth, but not in the least, except superficially, do they resemble

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them. When we say of some woman living in a country town, that she is "a Bovary," we are doing no more than comparing her with an abstract type in the interests of conversational convenience. We know perfectly well that between Madame Bovary and a creature of flesh and blood there is no true connection such as might be used to point a moral lesson.

And even when the artist goes out of his way to avoid the introduction of "types" and "characters," the colorless and insubstantial world into which he introduces us has little in common with our own. Admittedly, the elements which go to build it up are borrowed from reality. That is true of all novels of no matter what kind. The best as well as the worst are composed from details provided by recollection, fixed by memory, but retouched and rehashed for the purpose of presenting a "picture." There is no such thing as a novel which genuinely portrays the *indetermination* of human life as we know it.

The most, therefore, that may be conceded is that the novel, though it does not throw any revealing light on persons living in the actual world, may, and does, give us a great deal of information about the author. As something that increases our knowledge of human nature, and can therefore be used as a tool by the schoolmaster or the moralist, it may be useless. But it does furnish a considerable amount of evidence about the man who wrote it. But that is no very great achievement, and my priest would be perfectly within his rights in judging that the interest to be derived from absorbing a certain amount of information about François Mauriac as a result of reading his novels, is insufficient compensation for the total uselessness of his works, to say nothing of their possible harmfulness to those among whom he is called upon to labor.

It follows, then, that the Christian who happens also to be a novelist must resign himself to pleading no better an excuse than that of "vocation." He writes novels because he has some reason to think that he was born into the world to write, seeing that from childhood on he has struggled endlessly to do so. He is in much the same position as a dancer of my acquaintance who, at the age of six, was already practising "entrechats" and "points," or, as my brother, the Abbé who, at the same age, compelled me to kneel in adoration before the altar which his childish hands had built. But, in saying this, I am only too well aware how rash it is to conclude that what seems, on all the evidence, to be our determined destiny, must necessarily be the expression of God's will. A vocation for evil, no less than a vocation for good, may well strike sparks from the young.

Still, it may be that I was created and set down in one tiny segment of the Universe at a period when Revolt had become the theme on which most of our distinguished thinkers chose to expend their energies, for the sole purpose of bearing witness to Man's guilt when judged by the infinite innocence of

(Continued on page 32)

Mauriac and Dostoevsky: Psychologists of the Unconscious

BY SISTER M. MADELEINE, O.S.U.

Dostoevsky has profoundly influenced all of us, or nearly all.

(Mauriac: *Le Roman*)

FRANÇOIS MAURIAC, born in 1885, had breathed from early youth an atmosphere in which enthusiasm for Russian literature had reached a high peak. In his numerous non-fictional works, his own admiration for the masters of Russian literary art is evident in his frequent references to the names of Tolstoy, Dostoevsky, Gogol, Turgenev, Chekhov. Mauriac was especially familiar with Tolstoy, Chekhov, and Dostoevsky from his youth. In *Le Jeune Homme*, he speaks of the enrichment of the contents of one's mental life which is possible through human relationships, and mentions that someone lent him a copy of *The Brothers Karamazov*. "My eyes," he declares, "were opened as those of the man born blind."

His eyes thus were opened to a concept of human nature which conformed almost perfectly to his own views, as yet not precisely expressed. But he had concluded early in his career that the novel has no reason for existing unless it contributes to an advance in the knowledge of human nature. Consequently, Mauriac dedicated his art to the world of inner experience, with the aim of penetrating into the most obscure regions of the human heart. In Dostoevsky he recognized a master who had attained this goal, and observed in *Le Baïllon Dénoué*: "Dostoevsky made us cross the threshold of a more secret world and led us into the very heart of the Russian drama."

Mauriac was particularly impressed by the completeness of Dostoevsky's view which embraced the capacities of human nature for attaining heights of virtue and sinking to the most ignoble depths. In *Le Roman* Mauriac remarks that it is indeed difficult if not impossible to judge the characters of Dostoevsky. The sublime and the contemptible, the basest impulses and the highest aspirations are inextricably entangled within them. His characters do not resemble the universal types portrayed in the classical period of French literature—they are creatures of flesh and blood, encumbered by inherited drives, subject to disorders, capable of almost anything good or evil, and from whom one may expect all, fear all, and hope for all.

Mauriac, however, knowing that a public accustomed to the traditions of French classicism would consider Dostoevsky's characters as manifestations of complexities peculiar to the Russian soul, suggested a more comprehensive

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outlook. "We are amazed," he remarks, "to see Dostoevsky's characters experience sentiments contrary to those that it would be natural and normal for them to feel, but who among us, if he observes himself impartially, is not astounded at the unexpected, absurd sentiments that he often discovers within himself? Only we take no heed of them. . . . We strive to feel that which is logical and proper for us to feel" (*Le Roman*).

With this attitude of the French public in mind, Mauriac added further observations in which he endeavored to present an interpretation of Dostoevsky which stresses his unique skill in searching the depths of psychic existence. "It is not because the heroes of Dostoevsky are Russian," he maintains, "that they appear so disordered to many French readers; it is because they are men like ourselves, each one a living chaos, individuals so contradictory that we do not know what to think of them; it is because Dostoevsky does not impose upon them any order, any logic, other than that logic which from the point of view of our reason is illogic itself" (*Le Roman*).

Dostoevsky's grasp of the complex nature of the human personality with its potentialities for perfection in criminality as well as in virtue, elevates his art to a height which far surpasses that of Proust, at least in Mauriac's opinion. Why, he asks, should we accept as authentic in man only the stirrings of sensuality, only his most abstruse hereditary impulses? It is because the Christian Dostoevsky has seen in his criminals and his prostitutes fallen beings, but redeemed, that his literary attainment exceeds to such an extent that of Proust. For, as Mauriac continues, "God is terribly absent from the work of Marcel Proust. . . . the human conscience is absent from it. Not one of the beings who people it experiences moral anxiety, or scruple, or remorse, or desires perfection" (*Le Roman*).

THE extraordinarily deep penetration into the enigmatic human personality which Mauriac admired in Dostoevsky and which underlies his own character portrayals was stimulated to a considerable extent by the metaphysical investigations of the unconscious which were brought into prominence during the nineteenth century. The efforts of philosophers and psychologists to explore the human mind in an attempt to know its inner functioning led them to the discovery of an area of psychic life which, being vague and often indiscernible, was ordinarily unobserved, yet which operated as a significant and undeniable force. The explanation of the phenomenon of consciousness which was discovered in the mysterious depths of the personal unconscious lying beyond the margin of consciousness revealed an insight into human nature of unprecedented import. Dostoevsky stands first and foremost among the men of letters whose formation was influenced by these investigations, and was the first to explore the unconscious on a literary plane, tracing a path which Mauriac, along with many of his contemporaries, chose to follow.

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It is possible that Dostoevsky's masterly portrayals of the influence of the unconscious may be due to some extent to his reading of a work entitled *Psyche: Zur Entwicklungsgeschichte der Seele* by Carl Gustav Carus. Baron Vrangél, who was closely associated with Dostoevsky in the period after 1854, stated in a letter to relatives that he and Dostoevsky were thinking of translating this work of Carus. This fact may be significant, since Carus speaks of the suppression of all conscious activity in the unconscious and its gradual emergence again into consciousness. Carus also examines the role of the unconscious in sleep and in disease, both of which figure prominently in Dostoevsky's works. The opening line of Carus' work states that the key to the knowledge of the nature of the conscious life of the soul lies in the region of the unconscious. However, the convincing delineations of character which appear in Dostoevsky's pages perhaps have their origin principally in his own profound awareness of the mystifying elements which swarmed within him.

Mauriac, on the other hand, living in a later period when the concepts of the unconscious were far more widespread, drew from more numerous sources. Some knowledge of Schopenhauer and Hartmann, wide reading of Bergson, familiarity with the writings of Freud, convinced him that the investigators of the unconscious, in plunging into unsuspected depths of psychic life, had invaded a new world which offered vast possibilities of exploitation for the literary artist in his character delineations.

However, just as Dostoevsky explored the elemental deeps of his own nature in his efforts to analyze the recondite forces which affect human conduct, Mauriac likewise accumulated additional data derived from self-observation to supplement and confirm the investigations of philosophers and psychologists of the unconscious. Both novelists were long accustomed to profound introspective analysis. The revelations of Dostoevsky's inner self which may be found in *Notes from Underground*, as well as in the principal characters in his most famous novels, are paralleled by Mauriac's self-revelations in his various non-fictional works, and through the autobiographical character of some of his fiction. As the elements which compose unconscious mental life are widely disparate in every individual, each artist's literary production bears its own inimitable stamp. There exist, however, similarities in the technique of investigating the unconscious which may be indicated in Dostoevsky and Mauriac through a consideration of their analysis of the role of the unconscious in dreams, in sense impressions, and in the motivation of human conduct.

DOSTOEVSKY was profoundly convinced of the importance of the dreams of a subject in a morbid mental condition, and through his scrutiny of such dreams, he frequently unveils the unconscious mental life of his charac-

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ters. Raskolnikov in *Crime and Punishment* does not acknowledge in consciousness the guilt of his brutal murder of the two women whose skulls he crushed with an axe. Nevertheless, his suppressed experiences and their accompanying emotions find an outlet in his dreams in a manner which strikingly foreshadows the momentous role which Freudian psychology will attribute to dreams. As the censorship of consciousness is relaxed in sleep, the contents of Raskolnikov's unconscious mind may more freely manifest themselves, although they must sometimes appear in symbolic form in order to deceive the censorship which is not entirely off guard. Before he actually carries out his murderous plans he dreams that he is a child watching horror-stricken a peasant in drunken fury brutally beat and finally kill a gentle mare. Though someone in the crowd suggests using an axe, the death stroke is dealt with a crowbar. After the perpetration of his crime, his persistent efforts to stifle any idea of guilt gradually undermine his mental strength. As guilt feelings are incompatible with his superman philosophy, he can permit them no recognition in consciousness. However, convictions of guilt continue to emerge from his unconscious mind and manifest themselves through his dream content. As his travail of conscience increases, there is little distortion in his dreams, for in them he repeats his savage action almost as it was accomplished in reality.

Mauriac's concept of the dream is enriched by his readings of Freud and Bergson, yet analogies with Dostoevsky's ideas may be observed. The dreams of Thérèse Desqueyroux occur both before and after the crime, as do those of Raskolnikov. When a forest fire menaces the Desqueyroux property, Thérèse experiences a feeling of resentment that the flames have chosen to devour pines rather than men. Her trend of thought finds prolongation in an ensuing dream in which she sees a stretch of pines consumed by fire. As Thérèse at this period of her life has no love for her husband Bernard, her dream may perhaps be interpreted in the light of Freudian theory as a symbolic wish-fulfillment with a theoretical censorship substituting pines for the holocaust. In another instance, a dream of Thérèse provides evidence in literature of the Bergsonian theory that the materials of the dream, especially sounds, depend upon sense impressions which continue even in sleep. Thérèse sinks into anguished slumber on her return trip to Argelouse after her acquittal. In her dream, the grinding sound of the brakes as the train pulls to a stop is converted into the laughter of the judge who places before her the evidence which proves her guilt. This dream owes its deepest significance to the fact that through it Thérèse, like Raskolnikov, is confronted with the guilt which is not acknowledged in consciousness.

THE sense impressions which continue even in dreams such as those of Thérèse offer an almost inexhaustible subject for study apart from the

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unconscious condition of sleep. In waking states the unconscious may control the entire process of sensation, perception, and association of ideas. Although this process is common to all, the intensity of the response will depend upon the temperament of the individual, while the tone of the associations will be determined by the contents of the subject's unconscious mental life. The wealth of the subject's interior activity is in proportion to his alertness to sense impressions. The sensation being perceived, unconscious mental life responds with a catena of associations. Both Dostoevsky and Mauriac possessed keenly responsive sensory powers which contributed to their success in delving into the unconscious by describing complex interior activity resulting from a sense impression. Having observed these processes closely in themselves, they analyze the mental associations of their characters with psychological exactitude.

The guilt feelings which disturb Raskolnikov's sleep also manifest themselves in exterior actions which are explicable only with reference to his psychic states. His unconscious mind on many occasions controls his processes of sensation, perception, and association of ideas. A purely mechanical act led him to Svidrigaïlov, the only man who knew of his guilt. Although Svidrigaïlov had told him a particular address twice, he was so intensely preoccupied that he was totally unconscious of what was said. The address, however, was stamped on his memory, enabling him to reach the designated place in the course of his divagations though he was completely unaware of how he got there. Later, when Raskolnikov was in a state of feverish mental aberration, the appearance of the head clerk from the police office provided a favorable stimulus calling into consciousness his suppressed psychic contents which he poured forth in incoherent utterances about the very matters which, in his fully conscious state, he had feared would reveal his deed. His mental associations are concerned almost exclusively with the criminal action which he designates as "It."

These analyses of the force of the unconscious in sensation, perception, and association of ideas so strikingly illustrated in Raskolnikov may likewise be noted in Mauriac's fiction. The olfactory sense, which Schopenhauer calls the sense of the memory because it recalls more directly than any other the specific impressions of an event of the past, is frequently the channel through which a stimulus travels to the unconscious mind to initiate the recall of past circumstances and events. In *Le Noeud de Vipères*, a particular fragrance brings back to Louis' mind rich visual and auditory images of the remote past, when he first met Isa. The recall is vivid, as the emotionally toned incidents which had developed had strengthened the memory of these circumstances. Thérèse Desqueyroux, somewhat like Raskolnikov, is seldom free from the mental anguish associated with her attempted murder, for though she may

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succeed momentarily in putting it out of her mind, certain visual and auditory sensations frequently stimulate a chain of associations which inevitably lead to "the act." There are also numerous similar passages in which the higher sensory powers of Mauriac's characters are the avenues by means of which impressions from the exterior world reach the unconscious mind and resurrect the past. It may be noted, however, that Mauriac utilizes this technique with results which clearly resemble Proust, whose art he likewise deeply admired.

THE unconscious mind, which retains the accumulated experiences that enrich the sense impressions of the moment, is also a storehouse of synthesized states of the past which condition the decisions of the present. Conscious actions may result from the activity of interior forces rooted in strata whose depths are not easily plumbed by introspection. The instinctive tendencies characteristic of human nature, the dispositions transmitted through heredity, the traits acquired through experience, combine their energies to induce a specific line of conduct, the true motive of which may escape clear consciousness. However, the unconscious mind, in its eagerness to make manifest its dynamic stores of energy, may betray the contents that consciousness strives to conceal. An unguarded, spontaneous utterance on the part of the subject is revealing. It is the interpretation of this involuntary activity controlled by the unconscious mind which permits a penetration into phenomena of consciousness to uncover secrets of unsuspected depth and significance. Both Dostoevsky and Mauriac give all these factors due consideration in their endeavors to disentangle the intertwining threads that form the web of complex forces determining the motivation of human acts.

The complexity of unconscious motivation and its sudden revelation is analyzed by Dostoevsky in Ivan Karamazov who, governed by the instinctive tendency of the will to power and conditioned in his actions by the propensities inherited from his father, is unaccustomed to conscious reflection upon his acts because his life has been lived in accordance with the philosophy that all things are lawful. Though he does not realize the strength of his desire for his father's death, the reality of his unconscious wish is demonstrated by precise actions which he performs to his own astonishment. He is conscious of his hatred for Smerdyakov, yet finds himself softly and meekly conversing with him and cooperating with his plans, in spite of a strong conscious desire to dismiss him from sight in angry contempt. Ivan's condescension may be explained by the fact that he is vaguely aware that the murder he unconsciously desires will be committed by Smerdyakov. Later when mental illness has weakened the control of consciousness, Ivan opens to view a revealing glimpse of his inner self when he exclaims: "Who doesn't desire his father's death?"

Mauriac scrutinizes another aspect of the force of unconscious motivation

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in *La Pharisienne*. Brigitte Pian could not be accused of a want of conscious reflection upon her acts, yet the veil of self-deception so efficaciously conceals her impelling motives that she herself is the last to recognize her own hypocrisy. Of majestic bearing, possessing a commanding voice, Brigitte is unconscious of the fact that her life is dedicated to the pursuit of all that can satisfy her will to power. She is convinced that her zeal springs from her desire that the will of God be accomplished, but an involuntary outburst under stress reveals her true unconscious motive, which she must hastily cover: "You know very well that it will be so because it is my will. . . And when I say 'my will,' I express myself badly, for we must not do what we will, but what God wills. . . ."

THE foregoing references, which exemplify rather than exhaust the role of the unconscious in Dostoevsky and Mauriac, are preliminary to a statement of the main objective that both writers have in exploring the mental contents which have receded from the margin of consciousness. Both contemplate man as a being who, in ever progressing and freely self-determined development, is seeking his final end which is God present within him. In many instances, however, this divine presence is held suppressed in the deepest confines of the unconscious. When one or the other of man's desires for pleasure, for wealth, for power, predominates inordinately a violent conflict ensues between the God-Man relentlessly pursuing souls and the man-god created by man's self-deification to thwart His purposes. This struggle may be waged beneath the threshold of consciousness, causing the individual profound unrest if not actual anguish. It is the ambition of both Dostoevsky and Mauriac to bring this conflict fully into the light of consciousness, so that the human soul may understand itself and resolve its conflicts effectively. Thus Raskolnikov, after admitting his guilt, may be found seeking a new philosophy of life in the Gospels, and Ivan Karamazov is seen permitting the God in Whom he disbelieved to gain mastery over his heart. Mauriac's Thérèse persistently refuses to acknowledge fully in consciousness the feeble glimmerings of light which impel her to attempt the adventure of an interior life with God; but Louis in *Le Noeud de Vipères* and Brigitte in *La Pharisienne*, though tardily responsive to grace, gradually progress to a degree of self-knowledge which preludes Louis' salvation and Brigitte's enlightened pursuit of perfection.

But it is at this point that a disparity of deep significance arises between Dostoevsky and Mauriac. Although in *Crime and Punishment* and *The Brothers Karamazov* there are characters who manifest a passionate love for Christ which reflects the novelist's personal sentiments, Dostoevsky's religious views are confused and incomplete. Mauriac stated that Dostoevsky was ". . . undoubtedly the most ardent Christian of the nineteenth century, outside the true church. . ." (*La Vie et la Mort d'un Poète*). It was Mauriac's aim, as

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he followed the trail towards unknown lands and discovered continents submerged under dead seas, to reintegrate grace into this new world (*Le Roman*).

Mauriac saw in Dostoevsky a literary artist who through his exploration of unconscious mental life had produced works based on a psychological realism unique in the development of the novel. As his own goal was to contribute through his art to an advance in the knowledge of the human personality, he saw in the investigation of the unconscious a means to attain his end. Although mentally enriched by Dostoevsky's achievement as he undertook further exploration of unconscious mental life, he drew with discernment from his acknowledged master. Mauriac's view of the problem of the French creative writer induced him to disavow nothing of the traditions of the French novel, but still to enrich it through the contributions to the common cultural heritage made by foreign literary masters both Anglo-Saxon and Russian, by Dostoevsky in particular. Mauriac endeavored to portray his characters with all the illogicalness, irresolution, and complexity of living beings, but at the same time to construct his works in accordance with the talent characteristic of his race, thereby remaining a writer of order and clarity (*Le Roman*). Though he does not equal Dostoevsky's powerful artistry, Mauriac's penetration into the works of his Russian predecessor enables him to heighten the accuracy of his own distinctive character studies.

IN recent years, Mauriac's admiration for Dostoevsky has continued to inspire some of his articles (*Le Bâillon Dénoué*). He regrets that Russia has no successor to Dostoevsky or Gorki. It is to this fact that he attributes our lack of knowledge of Soviet Russia, for a people without novelists is an unknown people. In Mauriac's opinion it is the eminent dignity of the novel not only to reveal the inmost recesses of an individual but also to lay bare the soul of a nation. The best documented history of Soviet Russia would not permit us to advance one step towards an interior knowledge of the republic which has arisen to replace the Holy Russia whose heart was opened to us by Gogol, Turgenev, Tolstoy, Dostoevsky, Chekhov, Gorki. Mauriac sees in Dostoevsky's *The Possessed* an account of this transmutation of the Russian soul, a revelation of the laws of the alchemy whereby Soviet Russia developed from the Holy Russia dominating the pages of the most Christian of her novelists. Mauriac's hopes lie in the appearance of a Russian Proust who will release to the world a true picture of the new Russia through novels drawn from the secretly garnered experiences which Soviet Russia, without having wished it, shall have furnished him.

Opposed Modalities: Pitfalls for Catholic Writers

BY WILLIAM J. KERRIGAN

THE very existence of a Catholic press, periodical and otherwise, seems to demand from the Catholic writer of imaginative literature a somehow specifically Catholic performance; and from his critics, a somehow specifically Catholic set of *literary* principles. I do not think the demand has been met.

Clearly, performance and criticism currently accepted as meeting the demand rest upon the truth that what is specifically Catholic is the entire supernatural and its formulation as doctrine. But they rest uneasily there. For in speaking of imaginative literature I assume we are not in our age, as were Dante and Milton in their times, bent on creating fanciful embodiments of other worlds. I assume we are engaged in writing a fiction that has the customary connection with realities. But the realities of fiction and the realities of the supernatural exist, for us, in opposed modalities; the realities of fiction are essentially a matter of experience, whereas the realities of the supernatural are essentially a matter of non-experience (faith).

Precisely because we so little advert to the essentially non-phenomenal quality of the supernatural, Catholic writers and their critics run the danger of several pitfalls. It is these that we shall explore.

A frame of reference in which an explanation of the pitfalls may be understood is comprehended in the following view of what the term "imaginative literature" includes and means:

Imaginative literature includes poems, short stories, novels and plays. These on the one hand all differ from literature in which the informative rather than the esthetic predominates, and, on the other hand, do not differ so much among themselves as the differences in their names might lead one to believe. Their similarity is clear in the definition of the term:

Imaginative literature means compositions of any kind that communicate an interpretation of life—an experience, ultimately, of those general truths about human life that have commonly evidenced themselves to mature people. It is, in brief, *mythos* as contrasted with *logos*; some people would call it *Dichtung*; most people speak of it simply as "literature," and under that simple name it will appear henceforth in this argument.

First of all, then, may the supernatural (what Catholics mean technically by the supernatural) enter literature? It seems not. For experience is plainly

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of the very essence of literature, whereas, in contrast, the supernatural—grace, faith, the character impressed by certain sacraments, the gifts of the Holy Ghost, all the supernatural virtues—lies quite outside experience. This latter fact, though a commonplace of theology, seems to be far from a fact of common knowledge.

An elucidation, therefore, is indicated. In fact, understanding the non-experimental quality of the supernatural is as requisite for an understanding of the Catholic religion as for an understanding of the limitations of Catholic literature. It follows, too, that compositions which illegitimately exceed those limitations falsify, to that extent, the religion which they seek to aid.

The fact that in the Catholic view the supernatural is non-experimental, though this is, as was said before, a commonplace of theology, is unfortunately not something the writer can count on picking up from his parish priest, whose theology texts possibly did not give it the emphasis it deserves.

The facts about the non-experimental quality of the supernatural are these. Sanctifying grace, though a reality that inheres physically in the soul and produces the stupendous result of elevating man above mere human nature by giving him a created share in the divine nature, accompanied by the indwelling of the Blessed Trinity, yet produces no change that can be detected, no results that can be seen, heard, felt or otherwise experienced. The "experience" of being in the state of grace is a purely psychological one and does not indicate the actual presence of grace. People do not necessarily act differently (as far as we can see) when they are changed from the state of lacking to the state of possessing it; even if in those circumstances they do act differently, the difference is not necessarily ascribable to grace, and especially is there no evidence of the connection. As a matter of fact, what grace primarily changes is not a man's customary acts themselves, but their quality—the same acts are now not merely human but, by participation, divine. This change and this divine quality are, of course, completely invisible; we take them on faith.

Nor can we have any experience of supernatural faith or the other supernatural virtues (*as* supernatural); no change in intensity necessarily indicates grace; and we cannot recognize experimentally any connection between such a change and grace.

As for actual grace—God's help to man in the performance of good and the avoidance of evil—while we believe no good act comes without it, we never really experience the presence of it, even when we think we do. The universe of things and men that we experience is an entirely natural one (perhaps one person in a million ever sees a genuine miracle); it is the unseen universe, the universe that we believe in, without evidence, that is supernatural.

A perfect example of the supernatural is the Holy Eucharist. Though

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It is really, substantially the Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity of Christ, yet there is no chemical or physical test, no kind of observation by microscope or X-ray, no way at all on this earth to show that It is anything else than common yeastless bread and common wine. If a priest cannot remember whether he has consecrated the altar bread or the chalice, neither he nor anyone else, not even the pope, has any way of telling whether what is on the altar is mere bread and wine or the real sacramental presence of Christ. So it is with the whole realm of the supernatural.

We even have faith that we have, in the full sense of the word, faith. As for revelation, God has indeed given us some information about supernatural things; but not only do we lack any evidence of the correctness of this information (we take it on God's word—on faith), but we also and *a fortiori* have no experience of the things about which God has informed us.

Now, in view of these facts, it appears that the supernatural is gauche to literature, can play no legitimate part in it; for by its nature literature operates—both as regards the immediate data it gives its readers and as regards its ultimate "meaning"—on the plane of experience. This is no low plane, of course. Literature, in fact, deals with that natural which the supernatural comes along to perfect; its world bears somewhat the same relationship to the world of grace as philosophy (which operates exclusively on the plane of natural causes) bears to theology.

This situation has also an obverse. How, unless he be writing pure fantasy, is the writer of literature to dramatize what neither his readers nor he has had any experience of?

It may be well here to take care of two theological objections. First, it is quite true that those very rare souls possessed of a high degree of infused contemplation do have a limited experience of the supernatural, but not one that is—as essentially with literature—a communicable experience. Such, it will be recalled, is the very difference which Jacques Maritain in *La situation de la poésie* affirms between the mystical and the poetical experience. At any rate, the self-admitted failure of mystics to convey their experience by words is notorious.

Secondly, those few who witness a miracle do witness the supernatural and are able to tell about it. But what they witness is not what the theologians call the supernatural *quoad substantiam*. They do not, that is, witness grace, have no glimpse at all into the world of the Christian soul. What they experience is some mere change in or suspension of the laws affecting natural events and natural objects.

I assume that it is too generally admitted to need discussion that a miracle—like a coincidence—can be admitted in literature at the beginning of a train of action, say as posing the problem, but if it exists, instead, to help the story

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along or to provide the solution, it is the old *deus ex machina* and will not function.

THAT first pitfall, an error about the supernatural, is thus an intellectual deviation. It has a voluntary counterpart in the second pitfall—the failure to distinguish completely between religion and magic—because this is fundamentally a disorder of the will. For the distinguishing quality of magic is the desire to produce a supernatural effect, to gain a mastery over superior forces, or to have others do so.

Today this perennial human weakness is nearly always masked. It assumes, precisely, the disguise of religion. It takes the form of a running after the marvelous, a preoccupation with private revelations, apparitions, miracles, stigmatics and visionaries. As Monsignor Alfredo Ottaviani, assessor of the Holy Office, has explained, it is a perversion, caused by original sin, in man's natural religious sentiment. With no less cogency and authority, Saint John of the Cross has characterized the disorder as a form of spiritual sensuality—a craving to see the supernatural in a material manifestation. Unbridled, this lust makes one seek to bring the supernatural down to the level of the natural, where it can be *controlled*. It is a vice that should be named after Herod, who "hoped to see some sign wrought."

In literature the second pitfall consists—to pass over the grosser and more obvious forms—in treating prayer as if it produced its results as physical causes do. Characters (who, incidentally, show no signs of the faith that will remove mountains) control God by the magic of prayer.

As we may judge from our principles, here as elsewhere the supernatural resists experience (as experience—what the magic-loving crave—actually opposes the supernatural). As we can discover practically, too, to present prayer and what is prayed for as having a cause-effect nexus like that found among physical forces is to go unabashedly contrary to experience. To do so is thus, on the practical side, completely to violate the artistic conventions of the literary age in which we live.

As for the theological side, even when we have prayed for an effect and it is, as a matter of fact, produced, even then we have no experience of the connection between our prayer and the effect, which might have come about without the prayer. Only in the case of a miracle is such a connection plain. To reason otherwise is to be guilty of the fallacy *post hoc ergo propter hoc*.

THE third pitfall, essentially artistic, is an inadequacy in the conception of the general truths (the "themes") described in the foregoing material as underlying pieces of imaginative literature and as being facts of human experience that have commonly evidenced themselves to mature people. A theme, radically considered, must be sufficiently general and abstract to take on com-

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fortably the concrete, particular embodiment which the writer designs for it, for, to the extent that the theme is already particularized, to that extent will it resist further particularization. The more the sealing wax hardens, the less sharply it takes the impression of the signet.

No, the truth at the bottom of a piece of literature must be quite general, and that means that it will be about human beings as such. In other words, if the successful theme be abstracted from its literary embodiment, and stated in so many words, such nouns as Negro, workingman, priests, Catholics would all be too particular to be part of it. To sum up: the theme must predicate something, not of the baptized, the ordained, those bound by religious vows, or any other class, but of human beings.

Another necessity of the theme is that, upon being worded, it state, not what ought to be, but what is. Not only must it be a declarative sentence, but it must not be the kind of thing that ought to be put in an imperative sentence. For the stuff of literature is what we can experience, not what is handed down to us by authority. It need scarcely be pointed out that propaganda and literature are thus immiscibles.

There is still quite another danger in the introduction of such special sorts as priests and Negroes into literature, of course, and that is the special attitude which readers have towards them. In any composition, presence of elements towards which people have special veneration, tenderness, and so forth will mean that—even if the composition is not in itself sentimental—it is liable to get a sentimental reading.

To this aside on the false affective values given to a story by the presence of objects of veneration may be added another observation: some writers unconsciously use religious persons and objects in order to festoon Catholicism on an already existing story or other composition. It is always interesting to rewrite (at least mentally) compositions, changing the religious persons and things to something secular, in order to see whether the result still does not stand up as integrated; in order, that is, to see whether the Catholicity is meat or mere garnish. Catholic book reviewers could engage in perhaps no more wholesome literary exercise.

THE fourth pitfall, like the third essentially artistic, is a failure to recognize the claims of the other side of the tension between truth and its dramatic embodiment. Perhaps the situation might be visualized somewhat as follows: on the writing level we see something analogous to the Word's becoming flesh; the aery nothing of the abstract general theme is, in its concrete particular embodiment, given a local habitation and a name. Now the dramatic expression of the abstract and general theme must be, in direct contrast to it, as concrete and particular as possible.

It follows that a writer cannot intrude into his piece Christian doctrine as

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such. On the written level, that piece must be about things and people, not about truths, doctrines. Here, in fact, we are at the heart of the problem. On the one hand, a Catholic doctrine is commonly not general and abstract enough for a theme: it is not a truth about human experience; it is not a product of experience. On the other hand, the same doctrine is not particular and concrete enough for satisfactory experience on the written level. Again, then, there appears a reason for the failure of apologetics aping literature. Catholicity could not exist in successful literature like the raisins in the dough of raisin bread. In a story, Catholicity would have to appear as story. It would have to be compounded with story, as (at least for us non-Cartesians) the soul is compounded with a body to produce man, and the drifting chlorine with the dancing sodium to produce table salt.

THESE, then, are four ditches into which both writers and critics may fall. The problem should now be plain. It really arises from this fact: a piece of literature cannot ultimately *mean* what it says in so many words, because if in so many words it *states* its theme directly, to that extent it ships and scrapes bottom. In fact, the principle of the polarity of the conceptual and the expressive elements of imaginative literature is far-reaching and many-sided.

But perhaps the problem is not insoluble. Perhaps it is in its ironies and its ambiguities that the supernatural may enter literature; perhaps it may enter equivocally, that is, just as it does in life. Perhaps one may successfully ponder the manner of its entering the statement made by marvel-seeker Herod's contemporary Caiaphas when the Jews were discussing the advisability of Christ's death:

"You have no perception at all; you do not reflect that it is best for us if one man is put to death for the sake of the people, to save a whole nation from destruction." It was not of his own impulse that he said this; holding the high priesthood as he did in that year, he was able to prophesy that Jesus was to die for the sake of the nation; and not only for that nation's sake, but so as to bring together into one all God's children, scattered far and wide.

The inspiration apart, there is a possible solution exemplified in this most notable instance of equivocation, with its iridescent ambiguities, its profound irony.

Perhaps a solution to the problem may also be reasonably sought in the use of symbols. I do not, however, refer to the use of symbols that come loose and roll about on the floor when the composition is shaken. The test is whether one cannot go through a manuscript inking out all the "symbols" and still leave the piece intact.

But I have undertaken neither to provide a solution nor to guarantee that

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one is to be had. Having concluded, therefore, I feel a duty only to anticipate a couple of objections.

First, we can "know" that we are in the state of grace, but, on the one hand, our "knowledge" is only a loose moral certainty, and, on the other hand, that loose moral certainty (1) is indirect, (2) is certainly not an experience of grace, and (3) depends also on faith.

Secondly, it is true that, since literature deals with life and things as they are, and since there are people who think that they are experiencing grace and acting under its observable influence, these people are, therefore, legitimate characters for novelists and other writers of imaginative literature. The point is, however, that in such cases the literature itself should make the distinction. The discrepancy between the realities of the supernatural and the inadequate theology of the characters must clearly be an irony grasped by the author (and by his critics).

Notes on New Contributors

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Catholics and the Novel

By NEVILLE BRAYBROOKE

EVERYWHERE, critical standards are declining. That has become a commonplace in the Western world, so that now there is a tendency to forget it. In the case of the novel, reviewers have found such forgetfulness to their advantage: it has saved them the labour of examining current fiction critically with the result that all too often their columns read as re-written publishers' "blurbs." For there is a general ignorance about the purpose of a novel and the history of the novel; and it is an ignorance which is further emphasized by the complete critical disregard with which the term "Catholic novel" is bandied about in the press. For this reason in the present essay an attempt will be made first to trace the emergence of the novel in English literature and, secondly, to see how in this larger context what is described as the "Catholic novel" came into being. Finally the actual term "Catholic novel" will be examined.

A novel is a large diffused picture comprehending the characters of life, disposed in different groups and exhibited in various attitudes, for the purpose of an uniform plan . . . This plan cannot be executed with propriety, probability or success without a principal personage to attract the attention, unite the incidents, unwind the clue of the labyrinth, and at last close the scene, by virtue of his own importance.—Smollett.

AS to the first novel, critics, have pinned their choice on authors so distant as to have three centuries between them; and furthermore it is significant to note that their choice has largely, if not entirely, been conditioned by religious preconceptions. Catholic critics have tended to say that Chaucer is the first novelist; this comment on the strength of the *Canterbury Tales* is not pure Catholic campaigning, since it is true that much of his work is character-drawing. Yet ultimately such a judgment is invalid; invalid for the very good reason that Chaucer was primarily a poet and chose poetry, not prose, for his medium. The other group of critics, mainly a Whig group, have consistently put forward Richardson—the first novelist of the Age of Reason. However between a fourteenth and eighteenth century candidate there are other claimants who deserve attention.

In the sixteenth century, there were three decided attempts to write a novel. With *Euphues* John Lyly had a passing success; but with the death of the gallants and wits who frequented the courts of Elizabeth, its success died. Somewhat similar to *Euphues* was Sir Philip Sydney's *Arcadia*, but its success too was short-lived; and it was at the time a book loved more for its author than for itself.

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Admittedly court life made pastorals seem idyllic, but only to a certain section of society. In contrast to both Lyly and Sydney was Robert Greene's talent: although many of his stories were as like a fairy-tale as those of his two contemporaries, his "conny-catching pamphlets and Repentances" showed him to be a realist of the first order; his work was partially a reaction against artificiality, his preference being for Eastcheap and the stinking and stewing side of London, not the dazzlement of crown jewels nor the twitter of court etiquette. Yet these three attempts came to naught: the work of Lyly, Sydney and Greene went into obscurity, whilst both artificiality and realism in fiction remained unknown quantities so far as the novel was concerned right down to the seventeenth century.

From the point of view of fiction, the seventeenth century appears singularly moribund. Apart from Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, which hardly qualifies for the title of novel, the one attempt made at a novel was Congreve's *Incognita*; but his comment that "when I digress, I am at that time writing to please myself: when I continue the thread of my story, I write to please the reader" accounts in large measure for its failure to win an audience. Besides, the playhouses were open once more and it was in this direction that Congreve turned his attention. However, from another point of view, the seventeenth century was fruitful in providing the background from which the "novel proper" might emerge. The Civil War had produced a new consciousness, and with that new consciousness a new class had come into being—the middle class. Accordingly this new class (helped on by the spread of literacy) was ready for a new art-form. Real courtly life had gone for ever and the new class acted as a wedge in society as a whole: as it pushed its way in, men became increasingly conscious of their tie with things, animate as well as inanimate. In the rise of the middle class, the elements which in the next century were to lead to the Age of Reason were to be found in embryo.

Among the earliest writers to be fully aware of this shift of emphasis in society was Defoe: at the age of sixty he took his chance and wrote *Robinson Crusoe*, the first novel of genius to be published in the English language. Its characters had a stamp of authority about them, and here it may be apposite to single out Defoe's treatment of a French Benedictine monk.

And now I speak of marrying it brings me naturally to say something of the French ecclesiastic that I had brought with me out of the ship's crew, whom I took up at sea. It is true, this man was a Roman, and, perhaps it may give offence to some hereafter, if I leave anything extraordinary upon record of a man who, before I begin, I must (to set him out in just colours) represent in terms very much to his disadvantage, in the account of Protestants: as, first, that he was a Papist; secondly a Popish priest; and, thirdly, a French Popist priest. But justice demands of me to give him a due character; and I must say he was a grave, sober, pious and most

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religious person: exact in his life, extensive in his charity, and exemplary in almost everything he did. What, then can anyone say against being sensible of the value of such a man, notwithstanding his profession? though it may be my opinion, perhaps as well as the opinion of others who shall read this, that he was mistaken.

On occasion this passage has been quoted as a tide-mark, as it were, by which may be shown the low ebb to which literature had fallen at the beginning of the eighteenth century. The first part of *Robinson Crusoe* appeared in April 1719. Still one cannot help suspecting that critics who make this charge are confusing literature and religion. The most notable of this school is Edward Hutton who in his book, *Catholicism and English Literature* (1942), attempts to prove that with the Reformation English literature, and in particular fiction (perhaps because fiction is something more tangible to deal with than poetry), lost "its continuity of spirit." But this is to confuse the terms "religion," "literature," "society." No historian to-day for a moment would deny that established religion was at a low ebb during the Age of Reason: it is only when the charge is levelled against literature, and more specifically the novel, that such an accusation has to be questioned and countered.

Admittedly Catholicism at the time of Richardson was a shell of what it had been in Chaucer's day: nevertheless the morality of the earlier Catholic Christendom still existed in spirit, if not in practised dogma, just as it is true nowadays to declare that any European author (whatever his personal beliefs) so far as his works are artistic achievements is dependent for both his sensitivity and sensibility upon the Christian tradition, and to this extent is a writer working within an acknowledged framework of morality. (This notion is further developed in T. S. Eliot's book, *Notes Towards the Definition of Culture*, where it is pointed out that if one accepts culture as being a dependent upon religion and vice versa, then English bishops are a part of culture and dogs and horses a part of English religion. Smollett, doubtless, would have applauded this sentiment, as indeed would many of his lesser contemporaries.) But to hark back to Richardson and Fielding . . . Richardson was primarily a novelist of incident and in his books an atmosphere of strict morality pervades. Take this excerpt for example from *Pamela*, with its strong gothic element:

At about eight o'clock we entered the courtyard of this handsome, large, old and lonely mansion, that looks made for solitude and mischief, as I thought by its appearance, with all its brown nodding horrors of lofty elms and pines about it. Here, I said to myself, is to be the scene of my ruin . . .

Again in the full title of the book, a note emphasizing the excellence of the honest life is struck: it is *Pamela, or Virtue Rewarded*. In contrast to Richardson's work, Fielding's novels present an essayist novelist rather than a novelist

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of incident: but here once more the note of morality is apparent. Having discoursed a page or so on ancient heathen deities, Fielding in *Tom Jones* breaks in with this comment: ". . . I have rested too long on a doctrine which can be no use to the Christian writer . . ." So it is that this reflection of Fielding's which was also that of his audience is a reflection that permeates nearly all the works of the novelists of the eighteenth century: Goldsmith as well as Smollett, and Smollett as well as Sterne. For the time being the novel remained notably a story with a moral, even if at times in conforming to Smollett's definition its plot became so unwieldy as to defy a brief synopsis. It was only in the nineteenth century that a change was to come about, for it was a century which was to include Jane Austen as well as Thomas Hardy.

Novels . . . performances which have only genius, wit and taste to recommend them.—Jane Austen.

BATTLING with the nineteenth century novelists is rather like playing on the home ground. Mr. Pickwick is still the friend of all—the policeman as well as the professor. Nonetheless the phrase "nineteenth century novelists" is not so wide in its scope as it sounds: it has become the synonym for another phrase—the "great novelists," in which group it is usual to include Jane Austen and the Brontës, Scott, Dickens and Thackeray, and sometimes as if by way of an appendix, Trollope, George Eliot and Meredith. (The present writer does not agree with this grouping: it is merely given as a typical current opinion, reflecting an obvious decline in critical standards.)

This group—albeit not an all-embracing group—represents a body of writers all of whose works may be said in a broad sense to be religious or spiritual; for in all their books virtue is praised, vice condemned. Yet on the part of the public there was a certain dissatisfaction with such characters, drawn for the most part either in black or white; besides in many cases—with much of Dickens for instance—the narrative was becoming such a rambling affair that although less matter was not called for, more art was asked; and with that art more subtlety and penetration. In fact in 1878 Hardy was writing of the new man whose age was to come thus:

In Clym Yeobright's face could dimly be seen the typical countenance of the future. Should there be a classic period to art hereafter, its Phidias may reproduce such faces. The view of life as a thing to be put up with, replacing zest for existence which was so intense in early civilisations, must ultimately enter so thoroughly into the constitution of the advanced races that its facial expression will be accepted as a new artistic departure . . . His face was attractive in the light of symbols.

This passage from *The Return of the Native* was to strike a note of pessimism, of an attitude to life as something "to be put up with," which was later

to be fully exploited. In the meantime the important contribution of Hardy to the novel was that he brought to it both poetry and architecture (indeed beginning his career as an architect, his ambition was always to be a poet). Yet for future writers his impact on English fiction was immense; beneath his plots there was a pattern. The material might be ragged and rough, but at his hands it became highly glazed: like sculptured granite blocks after the sun—"the hope of life"—has set, his books stand as a magnificent but foreboding row of tombstones.

Equally important in their impact on the future generation of English writers were James and, later still, Joyce. Henry James developed the architectural foundations that Hardy had laid, and to them he added psychological penetration. James Joyce attempted a synthesis: in taking over the poetry and architecture of Hardy and the psychological penetration of James, he was prepared to test language to its utmost: if *Ulysses* showed how far linguistic experiment could go without losing comprehensibility, *Finnegans Wake* marked the point where experiment became obscurity. It was a lesson quickly learned by his successors.

Order in the social and political category is unattainable under our present psychology. . . . [All that can be hoped for] is a mess more favourable to artists than the present one, for a muddle which will provide them with fuller inspirations and better material conditions.—E. M. Forster.

FORSTER wrote the above comment in *Horizon* (1942). Eighteen years had elapsed since the publication of *A Passage to India* in 1924, but it reflects an attitude to life which has been his from the beginning. Analyzed fully, it shows itself to be a form of nihilism. With other writers in the 'twenties, and in particular writers of the 'thirties, it came to be replaced either by materialism of a more outright kind, for the most part, or by Marxism. Even a writer such as Virginia Woolf, for all her sensibility as a novelist—witness *To the Lighthouse* or *Between the Acts*—stands for a typically mundane attitude to life; an attitude, reflective of her generation doubtless, in which all major issues are evaded and an attempt made to crystallize the perfect moment; an attitude that assumes golden moments should only be accepted in their finest gloss and that such moments are either what is called 'aesthetic,' or else the preserve of the few whose castle is the Ivory Tower. In truth it is but a repetition of the philosophy of Aristippus of Cyrene.

However, if by a long view one condemns this attitude to life, as in the same way one also condemns that of Hardy, it must be added in all justice that writers of both groups can and do, could and did, produce works of art: all that can be said artistically is that their approach to their subject matter is such as to put a certain limitation upon their output. Like Forster, unless they change their medium, they usually write themselves out, becoming in the end repetitive. So it

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is that as one examines the period between the two world wars a question arises, a question which asks after Hardy, James and Joyce in what direction could the novel advance.

An answer came first from a group of Catholic writers living on the Continent. It included Bernanos, Mauriac, Gertrud von le Fort, Sigrid Undset—perhaps the most notable among its elect; and in England Graham Greene and Evelyn Waugh were to be its chief exponents.

[Certain omissions up to this point should be mentioned here: some writers have described Newman's *Callista* and *Loss and Gain* as "Catholic novels." *Callista*, a tale of the third century, is little more than a historical sketch written in fiction form (the same applies also to Wiseman's *Fabiola*); and, it seems, *Loss and Gain* would be better described as an attempt to present his conversion in terms of fiction—a feat which he accomplished far more successfully, with the veil of fiction off, when he wrote his *Apologia*. The omission of Benson is more serious but perhaps he is better described as a historical novelist writing about Catholic history. Even more serious, probably, is the omission of Belloc, Chesterton and Baring, save that their fiction is better served by the term "entertainment" than by "novel."]

I know how hard it is. One needs something to make one's mood deep and sincere. There are so many little frets that prevent our coming at the real naked essence of our vision. It sound boshy, doesn't it? I often think one ought to be able to pray, before one works—and then leave it to the Lord. Isn't it hard work to come to real grips with one's imagination—throw everything overboard. I always feel as if I stood naked for the fire of Almighty God to go through me—and it's rather an awful feeling. One has to be so terribly religious, to be an artist. I often think of my dear Saint Lawrence on his gridiron, when he said "Turn me over, brothers, I am done enough on this side."—D. H. Lawrence.

THIS is an apt point at which to examine the term "Catholic novel," and examined in the light of the history and development of the novel it cuts rather a vague and shadowy figure. By the same standards of grouping one could declare that *Robinson Crusoe* was a Nonconformist novel, or that *Tristram Shandy* was an Anglican novel, simply on the grounds that Defoe was a Nonconformist and Sterne an Anglican clergyman. Obviously such verdicts cannot be taken seriously. Further, it might be pointed out that when Léon Bloy published his two novels at the end of the last century, no such label was attached to them; nor, for that matter, did such a label appear for Compton Mackenzie's *Sinister Street* which was published at the beginning of the first World War. Yet by modern terminology *Sinister Street* had it been published thirty years later would doubtless have been classified with *The Heart of the Matter* as a "Catholic novel." For each book is executed against a background of Catholicism.

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With Greene, Scobie remains a Catholic—albeit not a practising one—throughout his book; with Mackenzie, Michael Fane (his central character) remains an Anglican whose every moment brings him nearer Rome, until in the last chapter this step seems inevitable. Indeed, when we stop to think of it the term "Catholic novel" seems but a catch-phrase which was minted during the 'forties by the modern press, just as in the 'thirties the similar term "social realism" was minted; and the reviewers in their turn have been glad enough to take over these terms, because by the use of such catch-phrases they have been able to avoid the more rigorous and exhausting task of examining novels individually. In a world of age-groups and political labels, their method is in keeping with contemporary trends in other spheres.

The point, then, that needs re-stating is this: that a man is first and foremost a novelist by talent and either an Anglican, Nonconformist or Catholic by belief. The fact that he is a Catholic will not make him a novelist if it is his vocation to be an engineer. For what counts ultimately is that a man should be true to his vocation, true to those talents with which at birth he has been blessed—quite literally blessed by God. However, should he be blessed with the ability to write fiction, other talents being equal, such a novelist who also happens to be a Catholic has certain advantages over his fellow writers in that his work has a defined religious framework into which it can be fitted; in that it has roots which are spiritual and therefore eternal; in that it makes his work an acknowledged quest because what matters in the end is that he should achieve his salvation through it. For a man to shirk his responsibilities as an artist is to renounce a God-given trust.

As a detailed example of what is meant by this added power that the novelist who is a Catholic has over his contemporaries, one may perhaps draw attention to two passages in modern fiction. The first is taken from Graham Greene's *Brighton Rock*. The boy, Pinkie, is "on the run," his razor-slashing at the races having been successfully accomplished.

He heard a whisper, looked sharply round and thrust the paper back. In an alley between two shops, an old woman sat upon the ground: he could just see the rotting and discoloured face: it was like the sight of damnation. Then he heard the whisper: "Blessed art thou among women," saw the grey fingers fumbling at the beads. This was not one of the damned: he watched with horrified fascination: this was one of the saved.

The second passage comes from *The Mango on the Mango Tree* (now published in the United States by Knopf) by David Mathew. It is about the member of an air crew.

Salva me fons pietatis. Ivor McKenna had never been much good in Latin, but he followed the Mass in the shilling Missal with the broken back which was slim enough to slip into his pocket. He had really hardly spoken to Skorzewski for he had just returned to Nairobi with *Le Ciel*

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de Normandie. It was death that brought all Catholics together; in their hearts they knew their duty. Then they stood, each man alone, before the same Redeemer, *fons pietatis*. The brotherhood of the Catholic Faith, going into Church and seeing men praying before the Blessed Sacrament, even on the trip; St. Joseph's, Cairo; St. Peter Claver's, Nairobi; Lagos Cathedral. Working in during foggy weather off Martha's Vineyard when the carrier was ordered to Newport to refit. Mass at Providence with the crowds jostling in and out. The first liberty boat taking them along-side the harbour steps at Montevideo. *Voca me cum benedictis*. He should follow more carefully. "Call me among the blessed." A man knew his own weakness, his own guilt; but one had such confidence in God's mercy to one's neighbours. The column of Latin ran down the pages with the English translation beside it. The Ordinary of the Mass ran on like a causeway. Ivor knew that his understanding of Latin ran out along this causeway. His ignorance stretched away on either side of it. He settled down to pray in the small church.

To take the second passage first, McKenna is presented in round terms and there is an honesty about the description of him which is not unlike Defoe's description of the French Benedictine (quoted earlier in this essay). The two characters are set out in their just colours so that one does not feel that in either case one has been made subject to a dose of indoctrination. The two men are of flesh and blood and are open to all the weaknesses to which flesh and blood are heir. Their religion is their own affair and, although as men of flesh and blood it influences their actions, their actions are the natural corollary of their religious beliefs. They are not puppets for their authors. The same is largely true of Pinkie in *Brighton Rock*. In the passage selected the contrast between the inner sanctity and the decaying exterior is well made. As a piece of writing it is both stark and powerful, though perhaps the phrase "with horrified fascination" is somewhat clichéd. Yet in spite of the apparent forcefulness, by comparison with Greene's later books, there was a danger at this period of Greene applying dogma too dogmatically to his fiction to let it still remain fiction and not become mere Catholic propaganda. As Pinkie says: "*Credo in unum Satanum*"; and both he and his girl-friend, Rose, have an awareness of sin which is denied to the other characters. For of Pinkie and Rose one might say that Hell lay about them in their infancy. This division in the book's different sets of characters appears inevitable in the plot's construction, but its inevitability leads to a certain falsification in the novel as a work of art. There is an underlying partisan note in the book; and with this religious partisanship goes an element of priggishness. But this was a danger of 1938 when *Brighton Rock* first appeared. His two more recent novels, *The Power and the Glory* and *The Heart of the Matter*, have dispelled any doubts that one then may have had.* The latter with its

*However, his story, "A Hint of an Explanation," published in *The Month* (February, 1949) temporarily raised this issue again.

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poignant last chapter with the comment "And do you think God's likely to be more bitter than a woman?" . . . is an example of the way in which Greene has brought to perfection a conflict without resolving the problem in terms of mortal and venial sins, but rather leaving such a judgment to the Omnipotent, his task as author being merely to present the crisis in human terms. Furthermore it is this precise refusal to pass judgments on their characters which has caused a charge to be made in Catholic circles that novels such as those of Greene cause scandal. It is a charge as well which sooner or later must be faced.

The method proposed here will be to put forward the comments of some other writers on this subject and so work towards a general conclusion. The comments selected are not meant to be conclusive in themselves, but rather to contain in embryo ideas that may be developed. After all, true criticism, which is just as much a creative activity as novel-writing, like novel-writing is essentially (when seen in broad perspective) a quest whose aim is to come face to face with Him in whose image all men are made. Properly understood in this context, there can be no such thing as secular literature.

In *Art and Scholasticism* Maritain says:

The essential point is not to know whether a novelist may or may not portray a given aspect of evil. The essential point is to know at *what altitude* he is when he makes this portrayal and whether his art and soul are pure enough and strong enough to make it without conniving with it . . . To write the work of a Proust, as it should be written, requires the interior light of a Saint Augustine.

To this Mauriac in *God and Mammon* has replied to the effect that the real novelist cannot but connive, cannot but associate himself with his creation: were he not to do so, he would become merely an observer and very quickly his characters would become cardboard figures. He then goes on to quote this biblical text which is really an appendix to Maritain's comment: "Begin by purifying the source, and those who drink of the waters will not be sick." Carried through, this exhortation is no restriction as some critics have thought: rather it prevents writing from being restricted to an Ivory Tower, as for example is so much the case with the novels of Virginia Woolf. Indeed as Newman with such perception said:

It is a contradiction in terms to attempt a sinless literature of sinful man . . . A university is not a Convent or a Seminary . . . Cut out from your class books all broad manifestations of the natural man; and those manifestations are waiting for your pupil's benefit at the very doors of your lecture room . . . You have succeeded but in this—making the world his University.

Although this advice was addressed chiefly to lecturers its application can be universal for as Newman concluded it was not a part fitting the Church to

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play a suspicious policeman, but instead a wise and tolerant guardian. She should see that no kind of truth was prohibited, but instead see that no doctrines passed "under the name of Truth," but those which claimed it rightfully.

Now it would seem that could a novelist always bear in his mind these precepts of Newman, Mauriac and Maritain the result would be to produce a masterpiece. But that would not be to allow for the bend in human nature; again talents differ so that although as a Catholic one might have the highest admiration for the purpose that lay behind Evelyn Waugh's novel, *Brideshead Revisited*, as a critic one could not confess the book a total success; in fact it would be the duty of a critic to ask himself whether, had the "blurb" been denied him which gave the purpose of the novel (namely to show in an old English family how the Catholic faith acts as "a twitch upon the thread"), such a theme was apparent from the text of the novel itself. Under such a scrutiny it would seem, at least to the present writer, that one might have grave misgivings. Even more is this the case with *Helena*. Despite one or two scattered paragraphs of sustained description (in which Waugh shows a great mastery of the semi-co'non) the book as a whole is disappointing. To put it at its sharpest, one might say that it is what might happen to *Fabiola* were it to fall into the hands of a Hollywood script writer and be presented as the story of St. Helena. For in *Helena* there is far too much reliance on the *deus ex machina* technique—this, for example: "Did she merely conform to the prevailing fashion, lie open unresisting to Divine Grace and so without design become its brimming vehicle? We do not know. She was one seed in a vast germination." Here is speculative biography, not fiction; and such asides, lawful as they are for the biographer, show on the part of the novelist what might be called a form of "spiritual cheating." They are imposed judgements which instead should be—as they are in most of Mauriac and Greene—apparent from the actions of the characters. Admittedly this has not always been so with Greene; nor has it always been so with Mauriac.

In the latter's book, *The Enemy*, there is this concluding sentence: ". . . Grace? It is the mark of our slavery and of our wretchedness that we can, without lying, paint a faithful portrait only of the passions." The dramatic has been sacrificed at the expense of the didactic, so that what should have been made clear in the plot has eluded the author's craftsmanship thus forcing him to underline the point of his book by this device. It is a failure of technique, of communication; and about failures of technique one cannot afford to be sentimental. That in the long run is always a disservice to authors.

Indeed the weakness of so much fiction written by Catholics arises from the fact that far too often they rely upon sudden conversions or the sudden abandonment of the loose habits of a lifetime. Naturally such conversions are not beyond the range of the novel, but if such changes are to occur they must be

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psychologically conditioned changes; they must have an air of likelihood about them. A formula mechanically employed is worse than useless, because it is the artist's function to re-create living experience; and because life today in any large city gives such an emphasis to sex, it is natural that sex will play a large role in any modern novel. To neglect it would be to exchange the real world for the world of swaddling clothes; to see men and women as from the prison of a cot, in which the bars obscure the vision (shades of Newman—"the Church is not a suspicious policeman"!). On the contrary, the novelist or artist who sees life as it is can also see life as it could be. For whatever the chaos of the word outside him, it is the artist's aim to encompass that chaos within the medium of his art and to give it a meaning. This is not more true of the novelist than of other artists, but because he is dealing in words it has perhaps a more literal connotation. A defence of literature is always consciously or unconsciously a defence of spiritual values because a concern for language—and hence meaning—is ultimately a concern for the meaning of the Word. That is what was meant when it was said earlier here that no literature was secular. For underlying the work of Defoe and Sterne, Jane Austen and Dickens, Greene and Mauriac there is a continuity of spirit: neither Lyly, Sydney nor Robert Greene may have intended to write like Hardy, Henry James or Joyce, but without the former the latter could not have written as they did: in their fiction there is an inherited tradition and a catholicity of spirit. Moreover, to accept this interpretation of the history of fiction is to make nonsense of those who would see the "Catholic novel" as a separate province—a twentieth century annex to the past: it is incidentally an interpretation which if rejected also makes nonsense of the whole Catholic position. For Catholic truth is something too vast, in fact too catholic, to be confined within narrow limitations since its province is the whole of life; and as a corollary with this concluding statement, in going from the general to the particular, one may add as an assertion of true critical standards that a novel must be considered first as literature before its specific merits as "Catholic literature" can be considered.

My Work and My Critics

(Continued from page 6)

God, and, as R. M. Alberes said, in his review of *The Weakling*—"to set against a literature determined by metaphysics, in which man girds at everything, one based upon psychology, in which man girds only at himself."

—Trans. Gerard Hopkins

The above is a postscript to Mauriac's latest novel, "The Loved and the Unloved," soon to be published in this country by Pellegrini and Cudahy.

Ernest Hello: Furious Originality

BY STANISLAS FUMET

SOMEONE brings joy, happiness, renewal; his heart leaps in his breast, and his eyes are lighted, because his message is beautiful, true, and good. As he stands before you, his face is filled with rejoicing. He extends his hands. He is timid and courageous, trembling and bold.

"I bring you *good news*!"

The person to whom the happy message is addressed turns away with indifference. Joy? No, thanks. Joy? What to do with it? The Soul, which appeared *called*, departs into the shadows and the crowd. The messenger is left crestfallen, dulled, grieving, with his disdained talisman; laughter, irony, and persiflage prevail.

The whole story of Ernest Hello is like this. A candid Breton (he was a native of Lorient), he tried to announce the good news to Paris, the intellectual center of the world. Paris did not listen to him in spite of the convincing tone he used; she did not see him in spite of his gestures, in spite of his originality ("the most furious originality that one might imagine," Léon Bloy wrote), in spite of his desire which would have been capable of burning cities if the spiritual always acted on the physical. Hello was, in his fashion, the stranger of whom he speaks in *l'Homme*, he whom the world wishes to exile; yet, it is the world itself which is exiled by its very act, for we know that the stranger who departs diminishes the city where we dwell.

So this poor great man returned to his Brittany, to die there at the age of fifty-seven in 1885, after having published about ten books and having contributed to some Catholic publications. He had a few years of celebrity; certain critics had not been stingy with their praise, notably Barbey d'Aurévilly, who had expressed his admiration, albeit with some discreet reservations about a very uneven talent. Uneven? Yes—as uneven as the battle of the human spirit with the light. When, for one reason or another, Hello cannot give the full measure of his soul, he is a shabby writer. Sometimes the subject is not worthy of him. At other times, and this is more frequent, he forces his inspiration and vaticinates with inadequate material. He is like all the inspired for whom the wind refuses to blow every day with the same generosity. Yet, when Hello has the breath of the Holy Ghost in his sails, he reaches new shores. Bloy's phrase is exact: "furious originality."

Hello is one of the profound thinkers that France produced in the nineteenth century. He shed intense light on varied subjects, and he debated the many questions in the name of a single question, for the basis of his doctrine

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was the cult of unity, an intellectual cult which came to him from his heart. With Hello, at least when he is great, intellect and love fuse beyond belief. It is about him that I have been able to write, "The heart and intellect are bound together harmoniously, in fact, only when they both have paradise to devour." Paradise is the proper word in the case of Ernest Hello: all his work, all his thought, all his action have paradise as their object, for the proper path of man is from earthly paradise to the celestial paradise, and there is no other way. Hello hardly separates the idea of God from the idea of paradise. He is the most human of the intellectuals, a Nietzsche of affirmation and faith, a humble and Christian Nietzsche. Pascal, Hello, and Nietzsche, with such different ideas, are joined in the memory; their intellectuality is impassioned, their concepts naturally endowed with the form and face of man. It is impossible to remain insensible to the accents of a metaphysics so close to being flesh.

Hello's accent, which is that of hope, is always in motion. It is in vain that it be calm, quiet, solemn, speaking only the truth in simple and clear formulae, for it remains animated by a voice which attests to a mysterious emotion. Hello erects intellectual scaffolds on the abysses of his heart; it is a fragile business sometimes, but the spectacle is admirable. Young people and older men who have found a book of Hello in an important moment of their lives have been overturned, returned, converted.

HELLO was an extraordinary critic in an age when criticism was stylish and considered a sort of science—less of men and works than of *things*, of the general rather than the particular. But he saw well the particular when he thought of the immense.

His method is not so much simplification as selection. He selects in opposing truth to error, affirmation to negation, good to evil, and one is so little accustomed to this sort of criticism that it seems that it was revealed by Hello. The pages that he devoted to criticism in *l'Homme* are known: "Criticism must initiate humanity for the man who is waiting; it must be a prelude to the concert that his descendants will play at his tomb. It must make names, reputations; it sheds the light. Is not this palm worth the trouble of being picked? As for me, I believe that it is salutary that someone is there, erect and valiant, who, having committed neither calumny nor treason, may, after the discovery of America, look Christopher Columbus in the face."

But criticism, to be enlightened and exact, must have its metaphysics. What will it be? For Hello, it resides essentially in the preservation of the real unity. Unity. This is perhaps the most astonishing of his words: "Unity! Cry of the earth! Unity! Cry of heaven, cry of the torn victim who asks for the return of his limbs." All his physical, mental, spiritual suffering is in this need of universal reunion; it is necessary, and this is the exclusive problem,

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for him to achieve the unity of Christ's body, the regathering of the pieces of dispersed Truth: the great Catholic communion.

With Hello, the highest thought, the most transcendent thought, is not separable from the body where it must have support in order to become accessible and enter into our existence. The Word is always there, trying to make itself flesh. It is existentialism in galley proof. This thinker, so impoverished, so naturally spiritual, never renounces matter. For him, it is the touchstone. God did not disdain it; He made the world of it. For Hello, matter is holy, the earth is holy, and their destiny is joined to the spirit because their function is to serve as the footstool of the Lord. Is it not a question of a new heaven and earth in the Apocalypse? Hence, the miracle, which would be a normal condition of Hello's life if God listened to him, must always act on matter. The miracle, he writes, is what makes manifest the "God of Glory." When we know what are the manifestations of this God whom he prefers and how he sees in the glory of God His charity, that is to say the supreme form of the Almighty's condescendence, we perceive that grandeur here is measured rather from above to below than from below to above; grandeur is God's inclination towards what is small, it is the Word making itself flesh, it is the spirit made humble, it is heaven descended upon the earth, it is the name of the omnipotent expressed by negation. Hello has this prodigious idea: "The victory of God is the victory of being conquered."

Some ideas and attitudes of Ernest Hello would, therefore, call to mind Léon Bloy and Péguy. The first sinks most of his roots in Hello; the second, so removed from Hello by training and temperament, inherits from his predecessor a disposition towards fidelity and purity, for he has the same hatred of evil, the same horror of sin, the same social seriousness, an irony of the same sort. Hello is at the beginning of Péguy's style: their styles perform in the manner counseled by themselves, with this same sovereign scorn for rhetoric and this predilection for absolute familiarity between him who thinks and that which is thought. For Hello, "the style is the man;" for Péguy, too. What counted in the spoken word, for Hello, was the pledge of the Son of God. "Speaking is an act," he says. "That is why I try to speak."

So Hello again returns everything to unity, his God, and whatever opposes this process is hostile. As a writer, he holds rhetoric in horror; as a thinker, he anticipates in pure reason the enemy of the intellect. Hello, of course, would be unable to speak against the intellect; he has a complete and mystic faith in it since the Holy Ghost has thus named one of its gifts. Hello tried to inaugurate "the age of intuition" before Bergson, but he kept for his doctrine the *nomen* of intellect and raised this intellect above itself or above

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what it becomes when man degrades it with his narrow mind and selfish heart; he utilized it only after having purified the notion of it. Bergson himself, it is known, had thought of giving to his "intuition" the name of "intellect." It is to be observed that one of the most characteristic signs of the real intellect for Hello is the faculty of admiration. Aristotle has told us that admiration, astonishment, is the source of philosophy. Hello does not cease being astonished; his heart beats only to admire. When he condemns, rejects, or reproves, it is in the name of an offended admiration that he refuses to proffer to this same admiration its sustenance, its bread. For admiration, he says, is a feeling which demands its bread, like a beggar—whoever does not admire, detests being.

So the enemy of Hello is Voltaire; he is the Accuser (Satan's real name). He who refuses to serve is the sinner, the disobedient one; it is he who does not love. "The wretched one, he does not love" is the cry of the saintly visionary who beholds the devil. Love, Hello says—and love is a brother of admiration, or a superior condition of the feeling which was at first admiration since admiration stays at the threshold of truth whereas love enters the Holy of Holies—love is what "divines." Léon Bloy was correct in placing great value on a similar formula: "Love divines." Hello says elsewhere: "To love is to divine." And again: "The glory of charity is its divine." When a man is not inclined to admire, when a man is not astonished, when he has no need to adore, this man does not divine, this man does not love. Who, then, for Hello, is this man who does not love? The man who does not love is not the sinner; at least he is not the great sinner, this man who allows himself to be blinded by passion. He is not the blasphemer; Hello believed in the "blasphemy of love." The man who does not love is the *mediocre man*. Hello is unable to find enough sarcasm to depict this man whose character is such that he does not recognize grandeur. His irony does not have enough arrows to pierce him as he would. He is the one who has been unworthy of his being, of his vocation as a man. Now it might be supposed that he is the exception, this man who is not worthy of the breath that he received so that he might say "Amen" to beauty and "I love you" to the truth. Such is not the case. Not only is he not rare, but he is legion. Whence the condition of the world, which is neither cold nor hot, but lukewarm, and which the Almighty is eternally disposed to spew out of His mouth.

Hello has discovered the true nature of the world. The world is an inn. It greets without distinction all who are presented, except Truth. When Truth knocks at the door, the world, which is so good to idols and so indulgent towards errors, the world is without feeling for the real God. The inn is always full when it is a question of room for the Creator. *Non erat*

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locus in diversorio. This word of the Gospel threw the generous mind of Ernest Hello into an abyss of fright.

HELLO does not possess the technique of philosophers, but he is placed among the thinkers—like Pascal. His thoughts are not completely thoughts in the tight sense of the word. They are views, and not all of them are remarkable; some are even idle and come close to being inanities. When Hello descends from the heights, he is no longer capable of appearing intelligent. The fact is that he is out of his environment. He does understand what is not marked with the sign of faith. Voltaire appears "unintelligible" to him. The lightness of the French mind is odious to him: he is a Breton. When he mentions Descartes, it is to announce that he will annihilate him. German thought would have been able to seduce him if it had not been pantheistic, if it had been willing to adore, as Tauler did. Hegel, however, fascinated him. He was obliged to baptize his dialectic, and Georges Goyau was quick to see this: in the preface to the 1923 re-edition of the *Plateaux de la Balance*, he observes, "In the face of Hegelianism, Hello's imagination felt itself seized by something akin to vertigo: if his faith had not helped him to regain possession of his natural reason and to exploit all its energies, I really believe that this imagination would have made a Hegelian of him."

But one cannot say that he developed his views, his ideas. He puts them on paper, where he watches them vibrate, and he trembles with the emotion that his unusual tone communicates to us. The grandeur of Hello is in his tone, which is not that of a literary person but rather that of one who contemplates. Hello liked to read aloud, and one is certain that he read admirably by reason of his "oral" manner of writing. This language is action; this language is painting. Although his style has little color, it is real: it streams with light, as he says, and the method behind this untutored manner is skillful. Balance, rhythm, high sonority are there, although the author did not "compose" his books; he was not tranquil enough on this earth.

It does not matter. Hello, neglected in the manuals of literature, is beyond a doubt with Baudelaire at the beginning of this spiritual awakening in France and outside of France, a renewal which is at the prow of our age in spite of appearances to the contrary. Hello never cited Baudelaire, whom he doubtlessly never permitted himself to approach, although they had intellectual inclinations of the same nature. However, Baudelaire emerged from the bitter knowledge of sin acquired as a student and from the shoddy company of Parisian artists and poets; our Breton, attached to his province, married early, anchored to Catholicism and virtue, knew only metaphysical and mystical abysses. He believed in Art, it is true, as much as Baudelaire; like him, he admired the "modern" Delacroix and had sent him some miserable poetry which he had written in his honor and to which the master had replied by

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a letter of encouragement full of modesty. Yet, there was nothing to serve as a real bond between Baudelaire and Ernest Hello except this common admiration. On the other hand, if Hello seems completely to have ignored Baudelaire, the latter read Hello a few years before his death. He was perhaps acquainted with *M. Renan et l'Athéisme* (1858), or *Style* (1861), or the articles that Ernest Hello wrote for Catholic publications. At least Jacques Crépet so informs me, and M. Crépet has no peer in Baudelairean scholarship. In any case, there is some of Hello in Baudelaire's spirituality. Joseph de Maistre taught them both to "reason."

If Baudelaire had left only an esthete's legacy, he would be today more or less relegated to the attic where the props of Romanticism are stored; his skulls, his thighbones, his garters, his diffused perfumes would rest among Théophile Gautier's *Enamels and Cameos*. But he left something else to posterity: an intellectual concern which preserves these "props" with an astonishing vitality and which suffices to make them glow, as well as a scorn for what is merely show and poetic pretense, a genuine hatred of Pharisaism.

Hello, for his part, has disengaged the human heart with as much violence but with more prudent austerity; he does not have the Baudelairean complacencies towards evil. If Baudelaire is simultaneously Holofernes, Hello is Judith alone. That is apparently why his lesson is not read so much. Baudelaireism entails a participation of the complete human being, base and lofty. Without doubt, Hello would have gained as an artist by not honoring the moral good exclusively, by not being able to escape this sensuous preoccupation with the world which will always win readers because it encounters immediate appetites. This severe avoidance of feeling, which sometimes becomes a pathetic fury, is incontestably arresting, but how far from actual tendencies is this sort of rigor!

One might think that he would benefit from his infatuation with direct language, a quality of writers in our time. Those who reproach Léon Bloy for his paroxysmal orchestration and Claudel for his unending opulence should return to the sentences of Hello with satisfaction in order to praise their fleshless bones. It does not seem that this literary form has such great favor at the moment. The aspiration is towards another type of poverty than that of these long Breton shores receiving the sea so chastely. The nudity of André Gide's sentences is pleasing because it is different; no longer a nudity of the soul, it is of the body since Gide's divesting obeys a sexual demand. Hello's denuding is eminently spiritual; it is impossible to find a style more modest, more chaste.

The silence which has thickened over the name of Ernest Hello has not kept the mustard seed from becoming a plant large enough to dominate the Catholic garden. Actually, his seed has grown above the wall, and free poetry

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has passed and noticed and stopped to garner the grains of this plant for its own use. Baudelaire profited. Rémy de Gourmont and others have been influenced. Bloy seized the whole plant and there the birds of his heaven made their nests. He was able to augment and hand to us the message of Hello.

EXACTLY, what is Hello's message? If there is a single answer, it perhaps lies in the desire with which he was identified: "This desire is not a desire that I have, it is a Desire that I am; this Desire is not an accident of my life, it is my essence. I am this Desire incarnate." And it does not come from man. Grace precedes in us the desire that we have for it. Thus, it is not a human will which determines desire greater than man, vaster than his heart and faculties; it is the end of this desire which raises him and which creates him.

But why have the impoverished been elected to return us to the fold? Why have the sinners been chosen to restore sinners? Why have poets been caused to lead back poets? The fact is that God has probably found in them the necessary flame, although the world has quenched them. Yet, the laics, who lived away from all Christian communion and who have known nothing of the Communion of Saints, have been taught by Baudelaire that

As long echoes are blended from afar

In a shadowy and profound unity,

Vast as the night and as the light,

So perfumes, colors, sounds all correspond.

Also, Hello has explained that "everything exercises a mysterious effect on everything . . . Creation is an association whose members extend to each other the alms of enlightenment." Léon Bloy asserts that "every man who produces a free act projects his personality into the infinite . . . if he gives a penny to a beggar with ill will, this penny pierces the hand of the beggar, falls, pierces the earth, passes through suns, traverses the universe." And Rimbaud, the accursed poet, has cried out that "Charity is the Key." There is evidence enough. If Hello's testimony has not been heard widely enough on this earth, the fault is not his.

—TRANSL. SPIRE PITOU

Gabriela Mistral and the Franciscan Concept of Life

By SISTER JOHN BERCHMANS, O.P.

THE award of the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1945 brought to Gabriela Mistral international recognition as a poetess of unusual distinction. More recently, tribute to her outstanding accomplishments as emissary of goodwill between the United States and Latin America has been paid by the Academy of American Franciscan History, which in December, 1950, conferred upon her its Sierra Award of the Americas. Although the latter, bestowed annually for meritorious achievement in the field of Inter-American relations, has no direct association with Mistral's poetic production, it nevertheless possesses a certain literary resonance. It recalls to mind both Gabriela Mistral's openly expressed admiration for St. Francis and the attribution, more than once made by the critics, of a Franciscan spirit to her verse.

An examination of the Franciscan influence upon the poetry of Mistral would seem to be, indeed, both pertinent and valuable. For, as it not infrequently happens, the study of one facet of a poet's work proves to be unexpectedly useful in clarifying another of its aspects. So, in the case of the Chilean poetess, an evaluation of the influence of St. Francis upon her poetic outlook serves not only to delimit the extent of this influence itself, but also makes apparent the fact that she really is not, as she has often been called, a mystic, in the accurate Christian meaning of that term.

The presence of a Franciscan note in the poetry of Mistral has been emphasized by various critics of her verse. Nor is this strange, since Mistral herself in one of her early poems, "My Books," suggests quite clearly that she owes a debt of inspiration to St. Francis. The poem has been aptly termed by Sidonia Rosenbaum a "kind of sentimental bibliography." In it, Mistral speaks first of Dante, the "noble Florentine," saying:

With his clarion cry he pierced me through.
Like a reed I still incline before his voice;
He leads me through the glow of his fantastic fires.

Then she continues:

Lips seared by the infernal flames, I seek refreshment
Where on velvet slopes of moss always dew-covered
The Little Flowers of Assisi freshly bloom,
And there in fulness of repose my heart finds peace.

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Yet has the Little Poor Man of Assisi actually exerted upon the spirit of the poetess the abiding influence that her words would seem to imply? Without doubt there is to be found in the verse of Mistral a profoundly Christian ethical pattern. It remains nonetheless a basic problem to determine to what degree her attitudes are motivated by the general tenets of the Catholicism which she professes, despite her occasional heterodox tendencies, in common with St. Francis, and to what extent inspired by the Saint's unique emphasis on what has well been called "the higher humanism of the Catholic spirit."

Perhaps the only way of resolving the problem, if it is at all possible to do so successfully, is to compare Mistral's interpretation of life as seen in her writings, both prose and poetry, with those attitudes known or believed to have distinguished the Saint of Umbria. In the case of the latter the sources available are unfortunately almost entirely secondary and hence inevitably somewhat unsatisfactory. But in that of Mistral, a key to her thought and feeling has been furnished by the poetess herself, who once declared, "My great loves are the faith, the land, poetry." Let us examine, then, her ideas about each of these pivotal loves of her existence.

THE Catholicism to which, as we have seen, both St. Francis and Gabriela Mistral adhere, is a faith possessing both an individual and a social character. On the one hand, it offers to its followers the personal ideal of loving discipleship to Christ; and on the other, the social goal of the brotherhood of all men under the Fatherhood of God. In the Saint of Assisi, his personal devotion to Christ assumed the particular form of imitation of the "Poor Christ." St. Francis saw Our Lord in His Divine pity accepting poverty and suffering so that He might redeem the world. And straightway as his vision became clear to him his heart went out in entire allegiance to Christ the Pitiful as his Lord. It is for this reason that Franciscan piety has always been characterized by an emphasis on devotion toward the Saviour in His suffering Humanity, a devotion which in the case of Francis himself merited corporal manifestation in the gift of the Stigmata.

Insofar as Gabriela Mistral is likewise moved by compassion for Christ in His suffering, she does, indeed, bear a resemblance to St. Francis. Her brief poem, "Good Friday," expresses with characteristic intensity the loving grief which turns into bitterness for her all personal joy, "because Jesus is suffering":

There He still hangs upon the tree,
Lips quivering as He thirsts.
I hate my bread, my muse, my joy.
Because Jesus suffers.

Again, in the "Song of the Just Man" it is the all-embracing charity of the Passion of Christ which awakens in her an answering spirit:

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Arms of my Christ,
Extended to embrace,
Rejecting no one:
Since I have known your love,
I, too, feel love.

Yet despite the evident sincerity of emotion in verses such as these, the entire body of Mistral's religious poetry reveals a fundamental distinction between her apprehension of Christ crucified and that attained by St. Francis. This difference is rooted basically in the fact that Francis was beyond any doubt a mystic, and Gabriela Mistral in any true sense of the term is not. In the *Mirror of Perfection* it is written of St. Francis that "Christ Jesus crucified was laid as a bundle of myrrh in his heart's bosom, and he yearned to be utterly transformed into Him by the fire of his exceeding love." But Mistral even in her devotion is not moved by this intense desire for union with the Divine Beloved which uniquely marks the genuine mystic. For the poetess, the desired object of her love is the earthly "beloved" whose loss to her for time and, she fears, perhaps for eternity through self-inflicted death, she has immortalized in the "Sonnets of Death." And if she turns to God in her grief, it is not that He Himself may be to her the source of ineffable consolation, but rather that He may accede to her petitions, granting to her lover pardon for his sin, and to Mistral the joy of reunion with him.

Furthermore, it should also be pointed out here that it is through her human love that the poetess feels she has come to glimpse the Divine. Thus, in "Poems in Ecstasy" she addresses her beloved:

Speak of God to me now, and I shall understand. God is this repose,
this understanding as your glance meets mine and lingers in silence
without intruding sound of words. God is this surrender of the spirit,
ardent yet pure. And He is my trust in you, ineffably complete.

Such an attitude is, of course, clearly not that of a mystic and contrasts sharply with that of Francis in the opening stanza of the "Canticle of the Sun," wherein he speaks of creatures as known in God, rather than of God as known through them:

Most high omnipotent, good Lord,
Thine are praise, glory and honour and all benediction,
To Thee alone, Most High, do they belong:
And no man is there, worthy Thee to name.
Praise be to Thee, my Lord, with all Thy creatures.

Mistral's lack of mystical experience may also be offered to explain her frequently reiterated dread of the approach of death. For her, because of the bitter separation it has effected between her and the "beloved," death is the "defiling one" she hates and fears, at the same time that she is fascinated by its macabre

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aspects. In "Rodin's Thinker," for example, it is the thought of death to which she attributes the anguish of the Thinker:

. . . . There is no twisted tree
Upon the sun-scorched plain, nor lion with wounded flank,
With anguish like this man's, at thought of death.

In "Questionings," it is the physical appearance of her dead lover which preoccupies her:

How do they sleep, Lord, they who are suicides?
With cold lips still blood-stained and temples shattered?

How vastly unlike these attitudes is that of the Saint of Assisi who, as his brethren relate, showed his joyful acceptance of the news of his approaching death by composing for his exquisite "Canticle" a final stanza in praise of "Sister Death."

In treating of the social aspects of Christianity, on the other hand, one finds again a strong resemblance between the outlook of St. Francis and that of the Chilean poetess. In the "Song of the Just Man" referred to above, there is implicit in the use of the expression "I wait" a longing to see Christ's teachings brought to realization upon earth:

. . . . At your feet I wait,
I wait and weep.

An even stronger expression of the same desire is seen in the widely-loved "Prayer of the Teacher": "Lord, show me the fulfilment of Thy Gospel in my time, that I may never falter in the daily and hourly struggle for its sake." This is indeed a plea filled with the spirit of Franciscan piety in its identification of self with Our Lord in His work for the world's restoration.

The same "Prayer" also reveals on the part of Mistral an appreciation of the Franciscan emphasis upon the deliberate choice of complete poverty and detachment from worldly goods as a means of self-liberation and hence of more perfect dedication to work for souls. That this awareness of the spiritual value of voluntary poverty was learned from Francis himself, Mistral testifies in the "Themes on St. Francis" wherein she pictures the Saint as exhorting her to "Learn to suffer loss." The lesson once learned, it is then Mistral as the prototype of "The Rural Teacher" who rejoices in her poverty which like that of Christ, the "sorrow-laden sower of Israel," renders in her "Still deeper . . . the furrows of love."

This flowering of love in service is a concept found, to be sure, in all truly Christian thought, but stressed particularly by St. Francis and his followers, for whom the entire social economy proceeded from the ideal of service motivated by Christ's law of love. In the case of Mistral it may even be asserted that the

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primary appeal of Christianity to her as a faith lies in its social implications. "I am a Christian, in a completely democratic sense," she once declared. "I believe that Christianity, with its profound social consciousness, is able to save all peoples." Yet in view of occasional notes of a decidedly exclusive Hispanism and even of a spirit of vengeance apparent in her verse, the inference may perhaps not incorrectly be drawn that Mistral's theoretical profession of Christian brotherhood has its practical limitations. The vast compassion for the ills of mankind which in St. Francis flowed from an impulse of supernatural charity would seem in Mistral to have its origin at least partially in that purely human maternal instinct which is strong in her, at times, even to excess.

It is, for instance, noteworthy that Mistral's most exquisite compassion is shown toward the suffering of little children. In "Little Feet" she laments,

O tiny feet of children,
Blue with the cold, unshod!
How can they see, nor cover you—
O God!

O little feet, sore wounded
By every stone and briar,
Chilled by the snows in winter,
Defiled by mire!

* * *

Two little suffering jewels,
Doomed to a bitter lot!
How can the people pass you by
And see you not?¹

And in "Poems on the Most Sorrowful of Mothers," done in poetic prose, she expresses a pity for the unwed mother so intense as to obscure the moral implications involved. Her attitude toward the bitter criticism which followed the publication of the "Poems" shows her outlook to be that of the romantic rather than that of the Christian for whom compassion for the sinner does not lessen an awareness of sin:

It is one of us women . . . who should speak of the sanctity of this divine and sorrowful state. If the mission of art is to bring beauty to all things, in a spirit of pity why have we not purified *this*, too, in the eyes of the impure?

I wrote the poems which precede with an almost religious intention. . . . Should they, then, be eliminated [from my book]? No! Here they remain, dedicated to women capable of seeing that the holiness of life begins with motherhood, which is, in consequence, a holy thing. Let them feel the deep tenderness with which a woman who cares for the children of others feels toward the mothers of all the children in the world.

¹ Transl. by Alice Stone Blackwell in *Some Spanish-American Poets*, Philadelphia, 1937, p. 264.

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COME from country-people and I am one of them," asserts the poetess of the Chilean valley of Elqui. One should expect to find in her, then, that sensitive feeling for life under any form which is often possessed by those who live close to nature, and which did so uniquely characterize the Saint of the *Little Flowers*. That Mistral does manifest a deep love of natural beauty in her poetry is undeniable. But again, an analysis of that love does not fail to make evident—as in the case of her human love—that her approach to nature is differentiated from that of St. Francis precisely because it is not, like his, a mystical one.

To maintain that such a distinction exists does not deny, however, that Saint and poetess do have much in common in their capacity for appreciation of the beautiful in nature. Together they possess a keen sense of the close relationship between the physical world and the moral and spiritual world. Like St. Francis in his affection for the lamb as a type of the Saviour is Mistral in her appreciation shown in her "Hymn to the Tree" for its symbolism of charity. Similarly, Mistral's "Speaking to God, Our Father," reflects clearly the spirit of St. Francis' "Canticle" in its thanksgiving for the bounty of nature.

The difference between the attitudes of the two lies, though, in the fact that Mistral even in her giving of thanks is essentially egoistic. Nature, that "wondrous dream of God," as she speaks of it in her "Decalogue of the Artist," is viewed always in its relation to the poetess herself. Most frequently, in fact, she sees in it not so much a reflection of the Divinity as an analogical representation of her own emotional states. Since the latter are predominantly melancholy rather than joyous, it is usually the more tragic and desolate aspects of nature which are met with in her verses. So, in "The Summit," a brief lyric in which she describes the setting sun as "shedding its blood upon the mountain top" she concludes,

I lift my hand to my heart, and feel
that my own breast is moist.

For Francis, on the contrary, with his mystic apprehension of creatures in God, all nature was seen as an expression of God's creative Love. The Saint himself, realizing his insignificance in the great scheme of existence, remained surpassingly content to share kinship with even the least of the other objects of God's creation, and Nature therefore became for him a fount of deep spiritual joy.

O creatures all! praise and bless my Lord, and grateful be,
And serve Him with deep humility.

THE contrast in outlook and mood which we have just noted above in regard to Mistral's and St. Francis' feeling for nature is equally apparent when we consider their attitude toward poetry. As Rosenbaum has remarked—although perhaps an exception should be made in favor of Mistral's verses for

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children—"There is never any gaiety in her poetry. Her tone, when not tragic, is pre-eminently sad." It is inevitable that this should be so, since Mistral considers her gift of song as bestowed upon her by God as an outlet to her grief:

The song upon my lips, Thou
Didst give me in purest mercy;
So didst Thou teach me to extend
To Thee my sponge bitter with gall.

And so, even when her song becomes upon occasion a response to the beauty which is "the shadow of God upon the Universe," she speaks of it not as a cause for joy, but as a "wound."

Since the only poetic composition of St. Francis which has come down to us is the "Canticle of the Sun," already mentioned, it may at first seem to be forcing the issue somewhat to compare him with Mistral in respect to his attitude toward poetry as an artistic medium of expression. Early biographers of the Saint, however, write of the songs which he composed in French as well as in his native Italian. And from what is generally known of Francis it is not unreasonable to suppose that these lyrics were similar in spirit to the "Canticle." A charming account of the composition of the latter is given in the *Mirror of Perfection*:

And sitting down, he began to meditate a little and afterwards he said, Most high, omnipotent good Lord," etc. And he sang a song over this and taught his fellows to say and sing it. For his spirit was then in so great consolation and sweetness.

It is interesting to note how clearly Gabriela Mistral recognizes that it was Francis' supernatural joy, born of Divine Love, which motivated the "Canticle," and thus herself establishes the contrast between the Saint's poetic spirit and her own. She writes, once again in the "Themes on St. Francis":

And Francis made himself to be the mouth-piece of song, so that he might be also the mouth-piece of supreme love. He did not wish to seek Our Lord as did Pascal, groaning in the darkness. He sought him in the rhythmic beat of his joyous songs, like that of the quick movements of golden particles of dust dancing in the sunbeams.

A second distinction between St. Francis and Mistral as poets may also appropriately be commented upon here. It is that for the latter the writing of verse is, if not a primary vocation (for her importance as an educator far outweighs that as a poet), at least a craft, while it was for the former only the occasional spontaneous outpouring of the heart. Yet when one considers the deliberate purposefulness with which St. Francis sought to use his gift to bring men to the love of God by sending his friars to sing his "Canticle" as the "minstrels of the Lord," he becomes no less than Mistral a conscious artist, if a mystic one. The latter, Mistral is not.

(Continued on page 95)

Book Reviews

Therese von Lisieux. Geschichte einer Sendung. By Hans Urs von Balthasar. Cologne: Hegner.

We have long looked for the modern approach to a saint's life, for something different from the panegyric edifying biography, the Nazarene sublimation and the psychological probings into the mysteries of an extraordinary personality. In Dr. von Balthasar's book on the theology of Saint Therese of Lisieux we have found it. The very principle of interpretation and comprehension of a saint is not the saint himself, we are told, not his life, nor his spiritual physiognomy; it is God's mission that the saint has to hand on to the Church through his personality, his life, through what he is, even more than what he says. Everybody lives a theological existence, Dr. von Balthasar says, especially the saint. So sanctity is first of all a theological, not a psychological, phenomenon. And the correct method of approach is that of a "supernatural phenomenology," recognizing the intelligible in the sensible. Only in our case, the intelligible is supernatural: the message of the Holy Ghost written in the flesh and blood, in the body and the soul of a holy man.

In this theological light, we see the truth of Saint Therese's message in her life, we see her *doing* the new truth, which she is charged to bring to the world. More still: we see her *being* that truth; she is much more than only the moral example; she is herself, in some mysterious way, the doctrinal contents of her message: something unheard of in the history of Christian spirituality (only Saint Paul presents an adequate analogy). Still, this sweeping identification leaves room for the distinction between the person who is the nothingness to be abandoned and the person who is the appointed work of God. We can even clearly make out the shortcomings and the shadows which limit and

darken, and so do not belong to, Saint Therese's mission. But they have to be judged in the light of that mission alone, not in terms of psychoanalysis or personal taste. Dr. von Balthasar can be at the same time more audacious and more respectful than many other censors of the saint in this matter, which proves that the principle of his distinctions is correct.

Of course, here controversy about the point of method is inevitable. Ida Görres, in her beautiful book on Saint Therese, *Das verborgene Antlitz* (see *Renascence*, I, pp. 44-46), uses the descriptive, analytical, psychological way. It would be difficult not to recognize that Dr. von Balthasar, the eminent theologian, is applying the wider, the more comprehensive, the theologically more relevant categories. He demands the theological truth, the ultimate intelligible of Saint Therese's life. But on the other hand, in order to establish his theological standards, he is forced to build on the material gained through psychological and other investigation. Phenomenology, even if it is termed supernatural, needs the previous clarification of the naturally accessible phenomena. Then you can read the straight theological intelligible in the straight or crooked lines of the sensible.

In this theology of Saint Therese, the old and eternal Christian word becomes surprisingly fresh and new. What the family is, the status of the religious, the rule of the order, supernatural love in the forms of obedience, chastity and poverty, the religious office, the Church, action and contemplation, the community of the saints, time and eternity, really take on a new meaning, a new light from within, which wanted to shine into our lives today. In bold, penetrating, sometimes adventurous interpretations, not only the doctrine, but also the life of the saint is thus unfolded and understood as theological truth. But there is also the expressly doctrinal mes-

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sage of the Little Way. It is presented by Dr. von Balthasar in two stages: the breaking down of our own justice and achievements and the building up of God's grace and His love in a series of renouncements. It is furthermore interpreted as a system of complete active indifference and acceptance of God's will. And in the last chapter the special character of Saint Therese's mysticism is very thoroughly and very interestingly expounded.

A book which wants itself to be so radically theological must raise objections. A layman may be pardoned if he cannot help feeling that the natural order of this world, that is the philosophical order of essences, sometimes vanishes into a theological sky. Theology should not try too rigorously to do it alone. The distinctions and clarifications of a sound philosophy can sometimes help even a supernatural phenomenology. In this way, Dr. von Balthasar's discussions of such things as marriage (pp. 101-103), action and contemplation (pp. 168-178) and others would have become even more forceful and more solidly founded. But the possible deficiencies of this book are only the shadows of its indubitable greatness. It certainly has come to stay. It will not leave us alone for long; somehow or other we shall feel its presence.

—JOSEF SCHWARZ

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Le Voyage de Patrice Périot. By Georges Duhamel. Paris: Mercure de France.

M. Duhamel, in presenting his study of Patrice Périot, again gives evidence of an awareness that the novel, a form eminently adaptable for defining the contemporary problem in terms of character and incident, may be endowed with high intent. In fact, although the hero never wanders far from Paris except to pass short vacations in the valley of the Oise, there is an epic overtone in *Le Voyage de Patrice Périot*, if the measure of failure and disaster may be epic by implication as well as tragic by result.

M. Périot, a member of the Académie des Sciences and professor of biology at the Sorbonne, lives surrounded by his family, his friends, his colleagues, his microbes, and his three Cartesian rules of conduct: work, meditate, and sleep. It is all very safe and comfortable, although inconveniences seem to become more numerous after his dear wife's death. His dedication to Minerva and the microscope has been fruitful, and his method has brought him fame. He has effectively managed to avoid anxiety and misgiving until he is inadvertently drawn into a web spun by the Communists: he is tricked into subscribing publicly to the party line. One tragic incident follows another, and he gradually becomes aware that his pattern of living has completely failed his family and himself in spite of his natural disposition towards the generous and the charitable. A bankrupt positivist, he finds himself entertaining thoughts of suicide. He explains to the only one left to him, his son: "We of my generation have failed. We have consecrated our life to a form of reason which is not *reason*, to this form of intelligence which gives power but not peace. And we suffer . . . perhaps you, our children, will find once more the way of hope."

The theme, although not completely new, is urgent in the light of what deterministic science has done for the world by bringing it new and incredible forces, forces that are still untutored and brute. Immediately, the problem is perhaps in the sphere of politics, and it is for this reason that M. Duhamel has selected the political approach; he is well aware that the personal, scientific, or even the academic treatments attempted by previous novelists are archaic by reason of having proved ineffective. The supreme accomplishment still remains while political and social consciences continue so meager. It is easy to understand why Patrice Périot comes to wonder with commingled scorn and irritation how Descartes could seriously

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write, "I have now only to examine the question of whether or not material things exist."

—SPIRE PITOU

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Waiting on God. By Simone Weil. Trans. by Emma Craufurd. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul. (In America, *Waiting for God*. Putnam. \$3.50.)

Intuitions pré-chrétiennes. By Simone Weil. Paris: La Colombe.

The Mysticism of Simone Weil. By Marie-Madeleine Davy. Trans. by Cynthia Rowland. The Beacon Press. \$1.75.

In *Waiting on God*, Emma Craufurd does not have a good title for her translation of Simone Weil's *Attente de Dieu* (Paris: La Colombe, 1950), which means "expectation of God." But she does convey the beauty of the original. From the short introduction, we learn that Simone Weil was born in 1909 in a well-to-do Jewish family and educated in full agnosticism at home, in the Paris *Lycées Duruy* and *Henri IV*, and in the *Ecole Normale Supérieure*. In letters, treatises and comments delivered by herself to the Dominican who almost converted her, Father J. Perrin, she explains, in the manner of a conscious witness, how she found God nevertheless. She was at the very threshold of the Church when she died from consumption at the age of thirty-four in 1943. Let us see what her aphoristic statements and paradoxes, her original imagery and superior exemplifications actually contain.

Simone Weil is a typical intellectual with "an extreme severe standard for intellectual honesty." During and after her philosophical studies, she indiscriminately read every book of value from Homer, Plato, and the Upanishads to St. John of the Cross and Maritain. The person of Christ among all the others strikes her convincingly as divine and the imitation of His life seems to her the only worthwhile task of man. Among her deepest

convictions are the divinity of Christ and the Triune God. As to the ascetical aspect of Christianity, Simone Weil from her childhood on lived a life of generosity and compassion with a delicate sense of justice, a life of practical and spiritual poverty, true renunciation, extreme purity and even heroic sacrifice. Thus she actually had followed Christ without knowing Him. "Veiled love can reach a very high degree of purity and power," she thinks, and furthermore, "Renunciation is nothing else but Love of God, whether the name of God be present or not in the mind." This understanding, however, which we should suppose would make her jump into the Church, delays her entrance.

Like Bergson and Werfel, she raises the question whether yielding to the idea that the visible Church is the only harbor of salvation, nor would she yield to the assumption that not only her ancestors but all the noble souls of all cultures and civilizations who did not know Christ have not been saved. "We might think that the Church had the monopoly of Christ and the sacraments. How can we bear the thought of a single crucified slave twenty-two centuries ago . . . if we think that at that time Christ was absent and every sacrament unknown?" This consideration, interpreted in her own way, drives her first into more optimistic speculations of the type of Henri de Lubac's generous errors as to the Beatific Vision as a natural goal. She also leans towards the concept of some of the Fathers concerning the *Logos spermatikos*. Furthermore, she interprets the experience of her own conversion as a truly mystical substitute for membership in the visible Church. But then she takes a pessimistic turn with the consequence that she states, as some mystics in history have paradoxically done in similar fashion, that she would rather like to go to Hell with the love of God than being saved as an exception. Finally, the motif of loving damnation in obedience to God becomes an ob-

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session. Her pondering on inscrutable mysteries thus brings this heroic young genius to the boundaries of madness ("my imagination mutilated by uninterrupted suffering," of which one may find slight traces, indeed, in her last essay on *The Three Sons of Noah*. Despite her love, or as she thinks, because of her love for Christ, she is driven furthermore to a helpless antagonism for the Judaism of her ancestors as well as to an avowed disliking of the Catholic Church which she conceives as of "a social structure," a society of gentiles, "a Church as an earthly country," a Church to which she does not belong, a Church with a "Church patriotism," of "collective emotions" which she detests. Therefore she fights for "implicit," rather than "dogmatic" faith, and for a personal union with Christ rather than one with the "Mystical Body," an expression she abhors.

This pathological element in Simone Weil which works like an irresistible inhibition ("A change of religion is for the soul like a change of language for a writer") does not hinder her, however, in trying in her own way to bring her sacrificial life to an always closer conscious contact with Christ, whom she believes she possesses in her soul with absolute certainty, whom she adores and praises in the liturgy with its unimaginable beauty as well as in the Passion which "entered her being once and for all," and whom she embraces spiritually with a heartrending fervor for the Eucharist, "the great scandal and yet the most wonderful virtue . . . at the centre of the Catholic religion . . . a little piece of bread." She cannot eat, however, the Eucharistic Bread—alas!—due to her self-inflicted stigma of remaining unbaptised, a stigma deepened by her *malheur* (which is translated *affliction*) into which the Hitlerian persecution of the Jews has brought her and made her an exile first to America, then to England.

It is doubtful that any theology or psychology may adequately deal with, let

alone solve, the case of Simone Weil. This reviewer, as a literary critic, would venture to say that the main stumbling block for Simone Weil has been her passionate rather than cool thinking in theological matters. Despite all her sincerity and complexity, together with her excellent active recollection, which she mentions so often under the name of "attention," and her unusual asceticism, she never asks herself whether she experiences her religious insights only *supernaturaliter in re* or *supernaturaliter in modo*. She, of course, takes the latter for granted ("Our consent to his presence is the same as his presence") all the more, since she dislikes scholastic distinctions. She rejects the whole Aristotelianism. Despite her intellectuality she admires instead Plato in his vagueness as an inspired mystic.

I have never met in literature a personality whose psychological structure and intellectual approach to the Holy comes closer to the complexity of Blaise Pascal (whom she, however, rejects, particularly for his *abêtissement*.) Pascal, though developing inside the Church, reveals the same accents of tension between intellectuality and *sacrificium intellectus* despite his free and easy consent to all imaginable other sacrifices. Simone Weil thinks: "The special function of the intelligence requires total liberty." And that is her last problem barring the doors of the Church. She will not give up her absolutely free investigation, her entirely unhampered criticism of everything, the Church included. And again she is caught in a vicious circle by submitting to alleged revelations made to her personally rather than accepting lines of conduct given her through the Church as the preserver of the deposit of quite another kind of revelation.

If shortly before her death her antagonistic positions are shaken, this is due to her admiration for the charity of Father Perrin, the first priest she ever met. He appeared to her as the representative of a dignity and perfection which she could

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not find outside the Church ("Except for those whose whole soul is inhabited by Christ, everybody despises the afflicted"). She was too intelligent not to understand that she was confronted here not only with personal achievements in a friar of the Order of Preachers, but with an attitude which by principle is encountered only in the best of the children of the Church, "Mother of the Saints," which was waiting to adopt her too. Her still evasive response then was this: "If one day . . . I love God enough to deserve the grace of baptism, I shall receive this grace on that very day, infallibly." Death came quicker.

The value of this book, necessarily full of heroic errors, is great for Catholic intellectuals who find here many of their own problems courageously approached, although from outside; it is greater yet for those who are struggling still for the Truth; it is greatest for pure and spontaneous apologetics, showing how fruitful the search for God may be, if equally based on intellectual sincerity and a virtuous life "waiting on God."

The over-all title, *Intuitions pré-chrétiennes*, chosen for Simone Weil's *Descente de Dieu* and *Esquisse d'une histoire de la science grecque* may not imply the non-Christian quality of her own speculations on myth and Revelation but of those attributed by her to the Greeks. As far as Simone Weil herself is concerned, these studies are not more and not less Christian than those found in *Attente de Dieu* (Paris, 1950). They once were offered for discussion to the study club of Father Perin. Simone Weil is not interested in the fashion of Carl Jung, to discover general human arch-types and symbols all the world over; likewise she would reject the fundamental barriers erected by Romano Guardini between *Myth and the Truth of Revelation*: she would rather be inclined to read with Hugo Rahner *Greek Myths in a Christian Interpretation* and believe with Jean Daniélou that the *Problem of*

Symbolism and the insight into revealed truth will gain from a comparative study of cults and beliefs.

But Simone Weil aims at more. This study is also an *apologia pro vita sua*. Her beloved Greeks must have had an equivalent of revelation, nay they must have had a pre-knowledge of Christ through their myths which was not inferior to the prophecies of the Hebrews, and they must have had even an awareness of the Trinity as springs from their deep structural insights into mathematics, music and astronomy, which they were able to link better to their myth than Christians today integrate knowledge and faith. By some bona fide omissions and shiftings of accents, by some analogies, "not-arbitrary prolongations," and again by her fascinating similes, Simone Weil tries to persuade the reader that in the myth of Prometheus, for instance, the whole incarnation, redemption, passion, crucifixion and even the Mass have been foretold or, as she would rather say: "symbolized." Prometheus, consubstantial with Zeus, out of mere compassion brings blessings to the suffering mortals. But he, "the greatest lover of man" (Aeschylus), knows that he has also to take upon himself the due punishment of justice destined for humanity. He is crucified therefore on a rock but with wordings (*pendaison*) which even envision the Cross. And if the Greeks had received from Aeschylus a continuation of the myth in a *Prometheus Unbound*, they certainly would have heard of his pardoning and glorification, because Zeus and Prometheus are the same God and their hostility is only apparent.

This is one of the examples of these speculations of a new, sophisticated and very learned gnosticism. Other symbols of Christ, according to Simone Weil, would be Osiris, Dionysos, Eros, Hermes, Apollo, Bacchus and Orestes. Symbols of Mary would be all the mother goddesses: Isis, Demeter, Gaea, but particularly the mother of Prometheus, Themis. What is

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here stimulating is the positive approach to the well known syncretistic theories of anti-Christian agnostics like Reitzenstein. And Simone Weil's theory comes from as deep a conviction as the late Father Odo Casel's positive theological approach to the Eleusinian mysteries in view of the Mass. "Les ressemblances," says Simone Weil, "ne peuvent que confirmer et non infirmer le dogme."

It will not be easy, therefore, to dismiss as meaningless these highly sophisticated analogies which sound like anachronistic, patristic speculations or Calderonian constructions in the atomic age. Simone Weil is capable of gathering her interpretations of selected Greek texts from Plato, the Homeric Hymns, Sophocles, Aeschylus, Aristophanes, Philolaos, into an impressive picture of a Greek pre-Christian philosophy of life. She makes bold to "demonstrate" that with the fundamental discovery of the mathematical function as mediation between the finite and the infinite, the unity and the number, with the philosophical concept of a World-Nous, called by Plato even "monogenès," and *logos*, synonymous for *arithmos* for expressing incommensurable relations, the Greeks have found another way to apprehend Christ as "*logos alogos*," "un scandale, une absurdité;" something like the folly of the Cross. Archimedes' intuition of a point from which he will take the universe off its hinges, again is the foreshadowing of that point "outside the world" in which the Cross, the sacraments and the pure souls are rooted. Plato's *Timaeus* undoubtedly contains for Simone Weil the Trinitarian dogma and a hint at the Eucharist. She finds the awareness of Holy Trinity also in the *Banquet* and in Philolaos' definition of harmony and friendship, "the common thought of separate thinkers."

The book is extremely difficult and profound and is precious food for thought. We may rejoice that the analogies identified by Simone Weil as revelations to the

Greeks, convincing for her and perhaps for others outside the flock, may verify the old French adage: *Tout chemin mène à Rome*. The Catholic reader may be edified by her glowing love of God palpable on every page and by her stressing that the Greeks were aware of such a love and its inseparability from chastity on the one hand and from one's submission to the providential mechanism of the cosmos on the other, a mechanism recognizable through strict science. This submission is said to be identical with detachment. The Catholic reader may also heed Simone Weil's intention "of giving the intelligentsia of today the necessary shock for reconsidering the Christian faith with new eyes."

The Mysticism of Simone Weil, rich in information, unfortunately was written without the necessary knowledge of mystical theology. It is reminiscent of the treatises of Evelyn Underhill, or worse, of Rufus Jones. It is rich in so far as almost all the writings of Simone Weil, published until now, have been exploited, not only *L'attente de Dieu*, but also *L'enracinement*, *La connaissance surnaturelle*, and *La pesanteur de la grâce*. Besides, we get some details of her character which are not in the French introduction to *L'attente de Dieu* by Father Perrin. Her father was a medical doctor, she took part in trade union activities, she was not very feminine. Because she looked strikingly Jewish, she was denied her request to be parachuted into Hitler-occupied France, an attempt, identical with suicide, which proves, however, that she was practically fearless. This statement of fearlessness, made by Mlle. Davy, could be paramount also for judging the possible genuineness of Simone's mysticism.

For Miss Davy, Simone was a saint, but not one of the Catholic Church. Hers is supposed to be a mysticism transcending all religions. She may have received her wisdom from Hinduism, Vedantism

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and Yoga technique as well as from the Christian mystics; nevertheless, the danger prevails, thinks Mlle. Davy, that the Catholics will annex her as they annexed Péguy, although "Simone Weil's views on the authoritarianism of Churches . . . are very similar to those of Krishnamurti." A lack of objectivity permeates the whole study. There is stated, for instance, with a certain satisfaction that Simone Weil rejected all totalitarianisms, Communism as well as Catholicism. Simone Weil, however, knows how to distinguish wherefore she states (and this passage is not quoted): "La Jeunesse Ouvrière Catholique seule s'est occupée du malheur de l'adolescence ouvrière; l'existence d'une telle organisation est peut-être le seul signe certain que le christianisme n'est pas mort parmi nous." (*L'enracinement*, Paris: Gallimard, 1949, p. 61).

Another weakness of the book is the minimizing of the supernatural which has in Simone Weil distinctly Catholic aspects despite her theoretical antagonism against dogma. She is not vague as to fundamental concepts like the *Analogia Entis*, the desire for things not earthly, and the ascetical life as a means of putting intelligence and will into a condition that a mystical invasion by God may become possible: "L'incompréhensible est la norme du connu. Quoi d'étonnant si la vie terrestre est impossible? . . . Il faut que la partie de l'âme qui est à la hauteur du temps, la partie discursive, la partie qui mesure soit détruite." (*La connaissance surnaturelle*, Paris: Gallimard, 1950, p. 258.)

Supposing that Simone Weil was a mystic—let us hope that the Catholic theologians soon venture some pros and cons as did Father H. A. Reinhold in *Commonweal*, October 26, 1951—then she certainly was all the more misinterpreted by Mlle. Davy. If any of the mystics influenced this intellectual bent it was St. John of the Cross with his system patterned on St. Thomas' doctrine of the maturation of infused virtues. But Mlle. Davy states

without a specific quote that Simone Weil considered St. Thomas "the great grave-digger of the mystical tradition." Irresponsible is her remark that Simone Weil longed "to become with Christ the Redeemer of the World." This remark would change a self-effacing soul into a hysteric illuminist. Distasteful is the question, although it be answered in the negative, whether this austere girl had a "discreetly veiled element of sadism, even of masochism." Careless is the exaggeration that Simone Weil, feeling Christ close to and with her when reciting the Our Father, had "surely a form of mystic ecstasy." In accordance with these views is the author's wonderment that she did not accept "the idea of indefinite progress of humanity." Almost her greatest assets, the love of the Cross and her crosses, are for Mlle. Davy an epochally conditioned bias of modern Catholicism which actually tinged her. For whatsoever Mlle. Davy considers regrettable in Simone Weil, the Catholic influence is accepted. Unfortunately the leveling down of her spirituality in general to something common to humanity clashes with her Catholic language. But also this is explained: "Since she was writing to a Dominican priest, she utilized terms which were current . . . in strictly clerical circles."

Other statements seem more correct and throw some new light on Simone Weil. She seems "tragically alone" and "chemically pure." Her soul is best revealed in some of her central concepts: "Humility is the root of Love." "Attention is the foundation of spiritual life." "God is 'I love thee.'" "God deposits a pure sperm in our soul, which, when it comes to maternity, will be His Son." On this latter, by the way highly Eckartian-Ruysbroeckian concept, Mlle. Davy comments with exaggeration but sound evaluation: "It is doubtful whether anything more significant has ever been written on the subject of spiritual re-birth."

Thus a critical reader, actually, may

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increase his factual knowledge about one of the most interesting religious figures of our time even with the help of this incompetent and biased little book. It keeps its value as an anthology of the main formulations of the thought of Simone Weil.

—HELMUT HATZFELD

Catholic University of America

Né de la Chair. By Paul-André Lesort.
Paris: Plon.

Chevaux Abandonnés sur le Champ de Bataille. By Bernard Barbey. Paris: René Julliard.

Paul-André Lesort, whose first novel inspired such favorable comment, is to be congratulated again; his *Né de la Chair*, the first of a projected series of novels designated collectively as *Le Fil de la Vie*, a title apparently inspired by Balzac, is carefully written and skillfully composed. M. Lesort's presentation is chronological, July 13, 1906 to February 5, 1930, and "the thread of life" is woven into this fabric of war and peace.

Charles Neuville is the central figure of the first half of the novel; his son, Yves, furnishes the core of action for the remainder. To convey the full flavor of the lives and personalities of these two men would entail a lengthy account of the story itself, since Lesort, like Flaubert, is convinced of the eloquence of detail in his treatment of setting, action, and dialogue; suffice it to say that all the scenes are convincing and many of them are unforgettable. One might select at random: Charles' departure for the army during the first days of mobilization and the destruction of his unit in a Belgian beetfield; his hospitalization and subsequent return to the line in time to advance under a blue sky and the flaming barrage of 1918; Yves' first day at the *lycée* during the bombardment of Paris; his graduation and first job at the bank; his visit to the movies with Denise to see *Ben Hur* in the spring of 1926. There are many other

tableaux; M. Lesort is a master of the cavalcade technique employed so successfully by Noel Coward. He is a superb reporter of events and details as unimportant as the doorbells that Charles is obliged to ring during the last twelve years of his life. These events are unimportant because Charles, Yves, and all their kind are little people; their tragedies are trifles. What does it matter whether or not Yves is unable to enter medical school? Who cares whether Mme. Caubet is dead or alive? Who pauses to consider Françoise's second hopeful grasp at happiness? Who remembers that Barbin was blown to bits in a muddy hole somewhere—somewhere?

And what would Lesort have us learn from all this? He never lingers long enough to gesticulate at the chaos or to wring out the anguish, but he wonders on one occasion, "Is the purpose of life to have children, to nourish them, and then to throw them on the world so that they may resume the cycle in their turn? Can the function of life be life? Is not this perpetual procreation as stupid as sterility itself?" Later, he answers his own question: "Each one seeks his own way, has his own answers to his own problems, and seeks out his own lucidity." The individual's quest for an understanding of his environment is the mark of the intelligent creature; herein is meaning which gives substance to his life. "Walk as if going somewhere. Nourish the young, bring them to maturity so they will be prepared to care for their own. Anticipated or not, the smallest or the largest event turns to that end: life waxes or wanes, emerges or disappears . . . the most banal facts are the stuff of which life is made." It is as simple as that, according to Lesort. The novelist who overlooks the minutiae fails. The real truth is with the fly on the ceiling; the genuine poetry is in the scribbling on the wall; the answer is most eloquently offered by the turning of the handle of the coffee-grinder in the kitchen. These are the things which, when

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properly considered, furnish the clues to the common denominator.

Bernard Barbey's sixth novel, *Chevaux Abandonnés sur le Champ de Bataille*, begins in the Black Forest during the last days of World War II and ends in a small Parisian apartment about four years later. In the interim, Pierre Boisselot, a survivor and perhaps the central figure in the situation developed by Barbey, returns to civilian life, takes a trip to New York and Hollywood, and finally returns to Paris to assume his duties as literary editor of a review that succeeds in spite of the paper shortage and inter-office jealousy. He marries the daughter of the general under whom he served as aide-de-camp. This marriage of Pierre Boisselot to Isabelle Loch furnishes the substance of the novel: a psychological study of marriage founded, if not on forthright lies, at least on ignorance of the necessity for complete honesty and understanding. Boisselot, finally aware that he is the husband in this tragedy, confronts his wife: "The error, if there is one, or the prideful illusion, was basic: to think that we could come upon something, that we could take out an insurance policy on happiness by marrying, that we could rest so securely in our way. Actually, we could construct nothing nor could we even destroy anything. Absence, time, or death itself could establish nothing between us or for us. We had no authorization."

And the horses abandoned on the battlefield? When the retired general and his son-in-law review the wreckage wrought by the failure of this marriage, they recall some horses they once saw left to run wild on a battlefield in Germany: "They stood in groups of two and three, huddled against each other, shoulder to shoulder. They were waiting for—God knows what. They were enduring their lot. There was, in their attitude, an air of resignation that had something fraternal about it." Pierre Boisselot and his father-in-law are

obliged to see their own likeness in these horses. Their mistake is beyond correcting and has left a wreckage that no skill can salvage: Isabelle, recognizing failure, has sought refuge in death. How could she cope with the memory of her mother, who played so important a part in the emotional life of her father and her husband? How could she control the secret that was not a secret? "If it is true that nothing durable can be constructed on falsehood, if we have paid for this knowledge in a bitter way, it is also true that nothing is saved by a tardy admission of the truth; it could never be complete by its very nature." And so the general and his aide-de-camp again stand in the midst of ruin.

—SPIRE PITOU

Marquette University

Die Bestimmung des Dichters. By Ignaz Zangerle. Friburg: Herder.

The Writer's Calling ("vocation," "task," "mission"—all are implied in "Bestimmung," and "Dichter" means much more than "versifier") is a powerful and subtly written book, and as exciting a volume as this reader has seen in a long while. But it remains exciting for Zangerle's poetical discernments and theological speculations rather than for the clarity of his aesthetics.

From his definition, in the introduction, of writing as the "symbolically elevated representation of reality by means of language," to his conclusion that the writer, raising himself aloft, "carries the earth up into heaven," Zangerle offers a series of opinions, now provocative, now tendentious, now apocalyptic, but all uttered with forcefulness and conviction. The book aims at answering that perennial question: what is the writer called upon to do in the present situation? what is his role? what, in short, is his mission?

One can cavil with the treatise for inadequate distinctions between the offices of prose and poetry, for the reluctance which seems to grudge an autonomy to art, for

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the displacement of intermediate and ultimate ends, and for the mystagogy that would relate mystical and poetical experience a bit too closely for the literateur's comfort. But one finds it hard to gainsay Zangerle's premise for the writer—the ontological recovery of reality at the foot of the cross. Yet, that is not the exclusive property of the poet. It is the recovery, rediscovery, imposed upon all Christians, and as much the "mission" of us all as it is of the poet.

While the difficulty is not an etymological one, perhaps what seems to be Zangerle's confusion may be explained in this way, out of the word "poet." There is a "poetic" element in the general mission common to all Christians. That is, we are all "doers" (with the necessary cooperatives of divine grace and our own good will) of our own salvation, but we are also "makers" in the sense of complementing the redemption and "making" Christ available to all. This last may be "done" by example, or it may be "made" by art. But art has its own domain, and its own *ratio*. For art to speak in kind, for art to remain art, the propaganda for Christ cannot usurp the form of the fictive, that is, poetic product (poem, drama, novel, tale), without forcing it into a species of rhetoric rather than poetic. Basically, then, the poet has no "mission" other than to be a poet—and that means, in the simple diversity of functions, that he is not to be a theologian, any more than Dante was.

This attitude, the Christian might say, could beget a healthy and defensible messianism, more fundamental than apologetics, because since the Incarnation all matter is signed with divinity. The very handling, then, of poetical materials, without the message thrust, but with a Christian "voice," could imply a theology that would not simmer through the story, nor break rudely through the poem. It could be as present and as vitalizing as air.

However, this is not enough for Zangerle. The theological bias of the book,

with a consequent, if almost unwitting, suppression of aesthetic, causes Zangerle to develop a familiar theme, the supplanting of art by the canons of theology, but he does so, it must be said, with a novel brilliance. Such a premise as his must lead to a theology of art, because his concern with the psychology of the artist and the nature of reality as such takes precedence over his awareness of the poem as a form, a structure of words; as a result he is driven back constantly to the radical science of theology, imposing upon the poem a form not specifically its own, but derived from theology or its ancillaries in the economy of redemption.

All this urges one to conjecture whether a serene and dispassionate aesthetic could emerge from the restive Germany of today, while realizing that the pre-literary tract, *Die Bestimmung des Dichters*, is just the vision that prudence and misery and zeal might release in post-war Catholic Germany.

In Chapter I, "Paradise Lost and the Writer," the author cites the metaphysical (pre-psychological) compact of language and love, argues that the lie is first and foremost an offense against love, and goes on to reaffirm Claudel's (among others) conception of the alter-Adam function of the poet. Finally, he reminds us that when the writer is actually fulfilling his vocation he is willy-nilly testifying to the creative power of God. Poetry, he concludes, is an irrepressible reminder of our lost paradise. The digressions on sex and the role of woman in the poetic realm are not motley, but rather a fuller dressing for his argument in this section.

"The Writer and the Cross," Chapter III, is, despite the title, a synoptic criticism of some prominent modern poets. The criterion is the attitude of the writer towards the cross. Zangerle's test, and the thesis, is that the poet must be *anima naturaliter christiana*. Rilke's gnostic secularization of the cross, and Kafka's vision of paradise as irrevocably lost, representing a Judaism

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which no longer expects a redeemer, exemplify those writers whom Zangerle must reject because of their particular unreality ("imagined reality"). Thus he underscores repeatedly the incarnationist role of the writer, coparticipant in God's creativity and the ransoming of the time.

The author's remarks on Church and State, on the possibility of a Christian tragedy, on the *esprit du coeur* as the only objective norm for Christian writing, on the poverty of saint and poet, on the currency of humor and satire: these will incite agreement or protest, from reader to reader. One does not touch so compellingly upon so many literary relevancies without risking violent disagreements. For example, his remarks on Christian tragedy, covering little more than a page, show real insight, cutting through the fustian stifling this question. There is such a thing as a Christian tragedy, he says, but only in one sense. Don Juan is a tragic figure because there is a hell. Only at the prospect of Christ is Socrates a tragic figure. Christian tragedy makes no generalizations about the relationships which the faith has always taught us exist between sin and death. This matter has been settled for all time: because of the Redemption the last word for the Christian is not despair, but hope. However, the particular instance can be tragic; it is this which reveals to us the danger in which we live. And it is this tragic instance which is the core of Christian tragedy.

"The Writer in the New Age" (Chapter VI), crying out in his own way, "Seek ye first the Kingdom of God," is challenged to convert the intellectuals, to muster to recollection and apostolicity all the waverers, the tremblers, and the deniers, to assist in the restoration of *community* to the world through faith and the visible Church. This is visionary and moving, yet, it must be stated again, the injunction for Christian Everyman. However, Zangerle's expression of the ideal may be a trifle doctrinaire for the American reader. To hear Americanism

and Bolshevism referred to as equivalent threats in Europe must disturb the reader over here, and he may be disturbed enough to ask himself if this is another jingoistic jarring of the political, and literary, sensibilities.

Die Bestimmung des Dichters deserves more popular circulation; I can do no more than recommend its early translation. The aesthetic purist can resist the pull towards its implicit center of gravity, a theology of literature, and be stimulated by its discussions. The more casual, and less captious, reader can concentrate on its wealth of poetical and theological insights, a penetration which is more lively and rewarding by far than is commonly met.

—RALPH F. BALDWIN

Catholic University

Les Raisins Verts. By Pierre-Henry Simon. Paris: Editions du Seuil.

Theoretically speaking, there are at least two ways of being a Catholic writer. In some instances, the author simply sees men and their destinies through his faith: a certain theology is the invisible framework by reference to which every event holds its meaning, even though the book deals with apparently profane problems. In some other instances, the writer takes as the very theme of his reflection this Christian belief, this fact of belonging to the Church, which is taken for granted in the first attitude. Which comes to this, that in the latter, the author solely takes for granted a humanist, or, in a broad sense, rationalist, framework—by reference to which he endeavors to define faith, together with other creeds, in order to have its nature and meaning better understood. This attitude (which is that of Saint Paul preaching "the Unknown God" to the Athenian philosophers) expresses a deep concern to remain open to everything human, so as to be able to impart salvation to all mankind.

In fact, very seldom can either of these tendencies help giving ground to the other. One of them may, however, be more strong-

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ly emphasized than the other by a certain author, and both can be alternately stressed in the same book. While reading *Les Raisins Verts*, one may think that Pierre-Henri Simon's latest novel is a perfect example of the first attitude. The act of faith, or what is called so (whether a deep and unquestioned decision, a weak and pathetic fidelity, or even a mere routine matter), together with its opposite, the refusal of faith, may appear as the main problem of this book. But when the reading is ended, one realizes that the whole novel is enclosed within an initial act of faith, within a Christian *Weltanschauung*.

These considerations, however abstract, should not suggest that we are dealing with a kind of Kierkegaardian essay more or less dressed up as a novel. In *Les Raisins Verts*, this ambiguous universe of the Christian novelist provides with its setting a cleverly constructed story. Pierre-Henri Simon belongs to those novelists who balance against each other the contingency and the necessity of events, artfully enough to make a real story with a beginning, a middle and an end—a greater achievement than it may seem. Almost at the starting of the novel, a sin is committed: a commonplace, indubitable sin. The whole novel shows the germination of the seed thus sown, which grows into a huge tree, casting a shadow of death upon four or five lives and bearing bitter fruit in the misunderstandings, hatreds and sufferings of two generations. The title is an allusion to the biblical proverb about sour grapes, which in a sense applies literally in the novel. On the other hand, however, Simon may also have thought of that entire passage of Jeremiah: "In those days they shall say no more, 'The fathers have eaten a sour grape, and the children's teeth shall be set on edge.' But every one shall die for his own iniquity: every man that eateth the sour grape, his teeth shall be set on edge." For in this novel, one of the children at least inherits the suffering only and transmutes it into saintliness; moreover, the guilty

father drinks to the dregs the consequences of his own fault. When the novel ends, the story itself is at an end: most of the characters are through with their miserable existence; some of them seem to have found in the depth of their suffering a peace and light of which God is the sole judge as the sole dispenser; the only survivor is a young nun in her cloister, who offers her prayer for the salvation of her dear ones and of all men.

As to the technique, the story is unfolded to the reader with great skill: the first part of the book is supposedly written by Gilbert, the father; then comes the journal of Denis, the son of his sin. The purpose of this twofold narration is not to suggest that no absolute truth exists, but to locate the events, as it were, at the intersection of two beams of light, to show how far apart stand the generations, and above all to give to each of the two men a chance to disclose his inner personality. Both narrators are endowed with critical and introspective gifts rather than with deep and spontaneous feelings. Simon, who is not only a novelist but a professor and a critic, obviously can bring more easily to fictional existence these self-analyzing, ever-questioning minds than those of less sophisticated characters such as the mother and the daughter, whose souls, either in mediocrity or in sublimity, are simple and healthy. The mother's character is certainly not an artificial creation, but her inner life remains practically unknown; what is really displayed to the reader is how she exists in the mind of the male protagonists as the fascinating or disappointing symbol of a thoughtless, animal-like loveliness. As to the daughter, one could say more crudely that the novel deals with her idea more than with her reality. She is the saint, and very few authors dare venture, as Bernanos did, to show a saint's soul as it were from within. Moreover, *Les Raisins Verts* seems to suggest that some saints hardly belong to the world and consequently elude a historical or psychological approach: Annou,

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the young girl, is less a character than a sign.

More important, however, than individual psychology is the conception which each one has of the others. From this point of view, *Les Raisins Verts* is the harsh and magnificent study of a family, with its usual and terrific network of misunderstandings. This is essential to the book, for the inability of the souls to meet each other, this loneliness which is akin to the loneliness of death, is precisely the wages of sin.

This isolation is mainly noticeable so far as the father and the son are concerned. The father is longing for mutual love and understanding, but sin has its own fatality, which keeps them apart. Gilbert has tried to conceal his fault, if not quite successfully, at least consistently enough to "cover up;" he is also comparatively successful in his career; on the other hand, the soon-deserted mistress and her betrayed husband may appear as victims of his selfishness. Denis, at least, who has spent his early years with them, chooses to see the situation in that way; he decides to take the side of the vanquished against the victor. Having been with Gilbert since the age of twelve as an adopted son, he turns down his father's love, money and religion, and becomes a Communist. The conflict between these generations comes at the same time as the conflict between the *bourgeois* world and the world of the Revolution.

This is but an approximation, since Gilbert does not accept all of the world in which he lives: he knows full well that a so-called Christian way of life can be mostly routine or hypocrisy, that social injustice is a fact, and more generally that this world is often content with concealing its vanity and cruelty under noble-looking lies. But, since he belongs to this world by his age, education and social position, his criticism often sounds like a social or religious self-examination. From that point of view, *Les Raisins Verts* can help the American reader to understand a certain European anxiety,

one which he never feels to the same extent. Like a Roman of the fourth century, the European of today thinks that he belongs to a doomed civilization, in which wars are less the cause than the effect of a curse. Indeed, Gilbert is quite able to separate in mind what deserves to die and what deserves to live; he firmly believes for himself only; for, however honest and intelligent, he is not strong enough to have anything to offer to a world deprived of its certitudes.

On the contrary, Denis thinks he is on the side of things to come. Simon wants to make the reader aware of the many noble reasons—love of the poor, refusal of wishful thinking, desire for self-sacrifice—which may concur in the making of a Communist. Whether this attempted explanation is successful only a Communist could decide. Of course Denis is not an "ideal Communist." He is one of the many instances of a man who cannot live comfortably in the bourgeois world and yet is too strongly attached to traditional ethical values to enter wholeheartedly into a Communist universe. All he can do for his cause is die for it.

These few indications are perhaps sufficient to show how rich this short novel is. Some will call it pessimistic. And it is true that every character, no matter which direction he may have taken, has to drink of the same cup of sorrow. Easy life, easy hopes, easy salvation appear equally deceptive. Nothing is easy, but everything has a meaning which is gradually discovered by the protagonists according to their means. The most valuable testimony is perhaps that of Denis, since he is the one who refuses consolation most deliberately and tries to assume his full share of this world of despair. What he writes in his notebook a few weeks before falling in the Spanish war sounds like a timid prayer of the "children of cursing" to the Unknown God: "I am a soldier who has chosen his side; from now on I belong to action. So much the worse if this action

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means death; so much the better if it means love, if love exists, if there is for me a chance, a grace. . . ." Most significantly, the journal of Denis and the novel itself approach their end by these very lines.

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The Betrothed. By Alessandro Manzoni.

Trans. by Archibald Colquhoun. Dutton.

\$5.00.

Manzoni's *The Betrothed* still is a challenge to the English-speaking world. Translations indeed are not lacking: the first one, by C. Swan, appeared as early as 1828, but it was incomplete and faulty. A number of others followed which were not found satisfactory. In America, G. W. Featherstonhaugh (1834), Andrews Norton (1834), and more recently Father Daniel J. Connor (1924) set themselves to the difficult task of making the great Italian novel accessible to their countrymen. Father Connor succeeded in producing a complete, faithful and generally correct version. But being confronted with a language that had not even been Manzoni's own, he tried to reproduce its character by an "old-fashioned" flavor and by letting the characters talk as if they belonged to one of Scott's novels. His choice was understandable, but it has made his translation sound stilted and artificial.

To avoid this defect has been Mr. Colquhoun's aim. He did not set out with the intention of doing a perfect job: "No translator of *I Promessi Sposi* can hope to reproduce the cadence, the subtlety, the terseness, of the original prose," and even less its humor. But the fluency and ease of Mr. Colquhoun's English have been praised by exacting critics, and the reader will appreciate the cleverness with which he has rendered the longer and more involved passages and reshaped them to suit the structural patterns of his own language without doing violence to the original text. The dialogue has been put into a modified colloquial English. I was surprised, how-

ever, to find a reference to "none of *them* things that have anything to do with our story," a remark which is made to come from Manzoni's own lips! Unless this be one of the numerous typographical errors that have crept into the text, not only in the case of foreign—Spanish—expressions, but also of English words.

The Italian reader, on the other hand, having been brought up on *I Promessi Sposi*, will be extremely sensitive to any shifts and changes which do not seem to be absolutely necessary. It is therefore not surprising to hear that certain proof corrections to the present volume "stopped all work in the library of the Italian Institute in London one afternoon, as every reader in the room joined warmly in a discussion on the shades of meaning of a phrase."

The present reviewer, being of the same pugnacious nature, would love to have been there. Manzoni's novel is a masterpiece in which every word, every expression, practically every comma, has been weighed and examined not only as to linguistic suitability, but also as to contents and implications. Take for example Don Abbondio's tormenting dialogue with Renzo in the second chapter. The cowardly priest, knowing that the closed season for marriage will soon arrive, tries to gain time. "What is a week, after all," he ponders, knowing only too well that it can make all the difference in the world: "via, per una settimana," a phrase in which the particle *via* is intended to lessen the effect of the following word. Not so in the English text, where Mr. Colquhoun has the wavering priest resort to a much more resolute expression: "Go on, off with you for a week."

Manzoni, who with realistic psychological insight is forever drawing the characters of his creatures in the minutest details, goes most deeply, however, with a few masterful strokes. Everyone will remember the passage where he shows us Lucia instinctively drawing away from the familiarity which Renzo had inspired in her on the eve of their marriage: "tremava

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anche per quel pudore che non nasce dalla trista scienza del male, per quel pudore che ignora sè stesso, somigliante alla paura del fanciullo, che trema nelle tenebre, senza saper di che." Father Connor translated *pudore* by *shame*. Mr. Colquhoun uses *modesty*, a word etymologically farther removed from the original, which has a less direct relationship to the knowledge of evil and fits less well the comparison with the fear of the child in the darkness.

Points such as these will draw any lover of Manzoni into heated discussions. But apart from these occasional divergences, I read Mr. Colquhoun's translation with the greatest enjoyment, and, as my thoughts went back to the Casa del Manzoni, one of the few quiet spots that have been preserved in my war-torn and half reconstructed home town, I was happy to think that a new English version had been added to the many collected there from all over the world; a further proof that the influence of our modest and retiring Don Lisander is still lively, even abroad.

In a work which has rightly been called "the novel of Divine Providence," this great Catholic novelist—possibly the greatest—has been able to make the teachings of the Gospels come to life. Centering his interest on one of the most God-forsaken periods of history, he has masterfully woven the threads that relate the lives of the humble to the unfathomable designs of God. His is not a victorious Catholicism which sets out to conquer places of power, but rather a simple deep-rooted faith kindled in the heart of the individual. This interior message should be especially valuable in our own times, and even if Manzoni's further development made him turn away from literature and fiction, his work should be particularly dear to any one whose purpose it is to study the vital relations between the tenets of a supernatural faith and the intuition of the poet.

—MARGHERITA MORREALE

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The Universal Singular. By Pierre Emmanuel. Trans. by Erik de Mauny. London: Grey Walls Press.

Although its jacket announces the *Universal Singular* as the autobiography of Pierre Emmanuel, a perusal of the contents reveals that the author had no intention of writing an autobiography, in the ordinary sense of the term. He states: "If at times I have expanded on certain decisive moments in my life, I did so only in order to reveal more clearly the progress of my inner development." He has adhered to this dictum. The autobiographical data he chooses to present consistently serve as explanatory factors in the development of his poetic consciousness. In addition, they serve as springboards for his provocative reflections on the nature of man and the universe. The book is a record of a spiritual odyssey not yet completed.

At thirty, Pierre Emmanuel "was seized with uneasiness at a life slipping through my fingers without having been lived." In the *Universal Singular* he attempts to assess his present position and to elucidate himself to himself as much as to his readers. Like his predecessors Baudelaire and Rimbaud, from the age of reason he has been obsessed and tormented by an insatiable yearning for the eternal truth.

As he surveys the past, he feels that the majority of his sufferings—personality difficulties, misgivings, doubts, fears, errors—stem from his childhood. Pierre, the man, feels that Pierre, the child, was a victim of misguided paternal ambition which abandoned him to the over-protective solicitude of timorous female relatives (in whose care he remained until he was ten years old) and then to the narrow, suffocating Jansenism of his paternal uncle's house. Pampered but smothered by the excessive prohibitions of his aunts, dominated and bullied by his dictatorial uncle, he became proud and reticent, he was both sensitive and sensual, he was unable to adjust socially, and he became isolated within himself.

Even more pernicious and detrimental to

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his character and mental development was the schooling to which he was subjected, he believes. His version of his school days assumes the form of a savage exposé of the whole educational system as conducted by the brothers in the Christian schools. He sums up this "obsolete system of teaching" in one principle: "give the child no peace." His scorn for both the personnel and the system was not lessened when later, as a lay teacher, he taught mathematics and philosophy at one of their schools. It is this reviewer's opinion that, although he acknowledges his debt to several members of the clergy, Pierre Emmanuel is prone to be anti-clerical.

Ill-equipped to cope with the realities of daily living and further handicapped by nameless fears and inhibitions and a highly unhealthy attitude towards sex, the young student became more and more distressed and sensitive, and his "natural leaning to solitude was intensified." However, he had learned one valuable lesson from Abbé Devert, one of the school's chaplains. Through him he learned to understand the meaning of confession. "Confession taught me that spiritual vigilance is the striving after self-knowledge, the detection and examination of inner energies, and finally, mastery over these energies which consciousness, permeated with the divine, canalizes towards their highest expression." This striving after self-knowledge was to be the motif of his life work; the detection and examination of inner energies, the rapport between these energies, consciousness and the divine are fundamental components in his ultimate synthesis.

His introduction to beauty was accomplished by Abbé Larue, a mathematician, who enabled him to comprehend dimly that beyond the language of logic lay beauty—"the other truth." While still bemused by the new perspective opened up to him, Pierre Emmanuel suffered the exaltation and anguish of an adolescent love affair. To this experience he attributes the awakening of the "language of the soul within me."

But it was his acquaintance with the poetry of Jouve and later with the man himself which started him on "a study which would determine what value I should give to poetry as a form of knowledge."

Jouve made him aware of the world of images, of symbols, completing the lesson begun by Abbé Larue. Up to now, Pierre Emmanuel had felt that his existence "could be nothing else but a synthesising activity of the mind, which would give to my particular themes their universal orchestration." But now he discovered in the works of Jouve "a total demand for truth. This demand was inscribed in the visible form at the same time, and by the same creative movement, as in the invisible form—in being." With delight, he realized that "the truth I had looked for outside myself, as a datum to be recognized by certain signs, was now within me, implicit but entire: it was the *language of being*, a language all the more universal for being highly singular."

For Pierre Emmanuel the old conflict, the old dualism, was no longer a canker destroying his peace of soul, rendering mental equilibrium impossible; he had finally found harmony, unity, totality. In due time he is gripped by the mystery of the Incarnation. "Through and for all men, Christ had consummated the historical drama of the separated consciousness and reunited it with Being . . . through Him, every man became contemporary with the eternal, and his life a microcosm of history." As he progressed in this new knowledge, he realized that "every man carries within himself the integral form of man." He became acutely aware of the "dreadful responsibility of the mind" of man. The act of consciousness demands that man be alert, vigilant every moment. The author recognizes these facts as undeniable, as necessary, but "since the moment I understood what Christian faith meant I have deferred my acceptance of it . . . I am a negative Christian, a Christian without the grace of being one." There lies his anguish. He continues: "Christ is

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the sign of absolute contradiction, the unbearable Image of what we are and do not wish to be." And then: "the Redemption completes the Incarnation . . . Hence the life of Christ becomes not simply the symbol of our own life lacerated and made whole again, but its reality, which it is up to us to grasp *hic et nunc*, without which our understanding of ourselves and of man remains forever threatened by illusion . . . I cannot decide between faith or despair."

Albert Béguin (one of the two men to whom the *Universal Singular* is dedicated) says of the poetry of Pierre Emmanuel: "it is the itinerary of a spiritual quest which is as yet only well begun. It is too early to define this powerfully eloquent verse, but it already reveals a religious soul which has been profoundly disturbed by the realization of man's sinful nature which thirsts for love and contemplation and which is keenly conscious of the gigantic drama now in progress on the world stage. . . ." This astute summation, given in February, 1944, may be justly applied to the *Universal Singular*.

The *Universal Singular* is a difficult book, its terminology is not always easy to decipher, there are many digressions—all of them interesting and valuable—and the discussion of language is original but often obscure. However, the persevering reader is well rewarded by the powerful portrayal of Christian truths and the insistence on the impossibility of *not* accepting them.

—LILLIAN MCCARTHY

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Poems of St. John of the Cross. Transl. by Roy Campbell. Pantheon Books. \$2.75.

The English poet, Roy Campbell, has translated twenty-one poems of Saint John of the Cross in this collection in which the Spanish text of each poem (taken from the critical edition of the Carmelite, Silverio de Santa Teresa) faces the English translation. The preface by M. C. D'Arcy, S.J., describes the revived interest in mysticism and the nature of mystical poetry.

This review will be limited to the discussion of one question: How close to the original Spanish is Roy Campbell's translation? At its best a translation is the wrong side of the tapestry—something of the original is captured and something is lost. What Roy Campbell is most intent on preserving is the verse form of the Spanish. In his translation of the famous "Cántico espiritual," (¿A dónde te escondiste . . .), for instance, he is very skillful in approaching the form of the original, the *lira*, invented by Garcilaso de la Vega and used in the best poems of Saint John of the Cross and Fray Luis de León. It is his success in carrying this over into the English that distinguishes his translation from others.

But when Roy Campbell decided to approach as far as possible in English the verse pattern of the "Cántico" he had to make many sacrifices. He had to resort to inversion, which slowed up the fast forward movement of the original and gave to the poem a spiral movement. This is one of the reasons his translation lacks the breathless intensity of the original, its precision and directness.

Campbell leaves nothing out in his translation. At times he adds something that breaks the poem. In stanza nineteen, for instance, he translates: "Allí me dió su pecho, / Allí me enseñó ciencia muy sabrosa," by: "He gave his breast; seraphic / In savour was the science that he taught." Saint John says that the science was "savory." Campbell's addition of the word *seraphic* is poor because the poem is written on the level of human love that stands, of course, for divine love. Saint John does not mix these two levels; he avoids such words as *seraphic* in the "Cántico." It is because of this that Father D'Arcy says in his preface: "There are those who will refuse to believe that this mystical verse is anything more than concealed human passion. . . . This experience [mystical love] is as remote as can be from the hot life of the senses or even

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the exalted sharing of human love. Nevertheless just because God is love and man was made in the image of God, the symbolism of human love can be turned to use and made to describe what are the effects of mystical union. How this can be done only a Saint like St. John of the Cross can tell us, and he does so by so using language that we know all the time how the images of lover and beloved . . . are no more exact than pointer readings; they are copper coins acting as currency for silver." Roy Campbell with this addition of *seraphic* mixes the copper with the silver.

The ordinary diction of the "Cántico" makes the poem difficult to translate. Saint John with the commonest, most "unpoetic" of words is able to reach great heights. He chooses words that the poet usually avoids because of their death from overuse, their lack of color. These he places in a pattern that charges them with wonder; in his setting they become strange and marvelous. As the late Spanish poet, Pedro Salinas, says of them: "They give the impression of being charged with poetic potency like no other written work in this world."

Roy Campbell sometimes avoids these plain words by using synonyms. These occasionally have too much color, too many overtones, for this black and white line drawing of St. John. He translates stanza three of the "Cántico," for instance, "Buscando mis amores, / Iré por esos montes y riberas" by "To fetch my loves more near, / Amongst these mountains and ravines I'll stray." To translate the common verb, *iré* (I'll go) by *I'll stray* brings into the translation a note of aimlessness that the original does not have; the goal is always too clearly discernible, although at this moment the bridegroom has fled.

Another addition which subtracts from the intensity of the poem is that of the verbs in stanzas fourteen, fifteen and sixteen. At this point the Bride is so moved that she is unable to connect her ideas;

she simply points to the things around her that have taken on a marvelous light.

There are lines which can not be approached in translation. Stanza seven ends with the famous lines, "Un no se *qué que quedan* balbuciendo" ("Babbling I know not what"), in which the repetition of the sound *que* is the actual stuttering of the verb *balbuciendo*.

Because of the full rhyme (ababb) as well as the inversion, the English translation of the "Cántico" does not sound so modern to the English ear as this sixteenth century poem does to the Spanish ear. The best of contemporary Spanish poets have turned back to this form and others used by Saint John of the Cross. Spain is a traditional country; things do not become easily dated.

It is to the credit of Roy Campbell as a translator that there are so few peccadillos in his rendering of the "Cántico" which perforce lost something once he decided to approach in the English verse form the Spanish *lira*.

—MARGARET J. BATES
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The Wisdom of Sorrow. By Ricardo León.
Transl. by Philip H. Riley and Hubert J. Tunney. Ave Maria Press. \$3.50.

Ricardo León, a Spanish and profoundly Catholic writer, has enriched contemporary Spanish literature with his classical novels, and particularly with *El amor de los amores*, published in 1910. This novel has been translated by Philip H. Riley of the University of Notre Dame and Hubert J. Tunney of Loras College under the title of *The Wisdom of Sorrow*. In this novel Ricardo León reveals himself as a classicist, possessed of the beauty and depth of Spain's traditions in culture and religion, and revealing that beauty enveloped in Castilian mysticism. In his portrayal of Don Fernando Villalaz, we see a man of strong character, purified by sorrow, finding his solace in communing with God in silent prayer, and pouring out his soul in grati-

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tude for the blessings he has received. Finally, we see him stripping himself of his worldly possessions to the point of giving his lordly garments to a poor beggar, asking alms, clothed in a robe of sackcloth. After dispossessing himself of the wealth and pomp of his senorial rank, he is born again with another body and spirit, and, guided by pure and heroic motives, he devotes himself to the practice of the highest charity—the charity of love.

Ricardo León tells us in the prologue of the novel that he is going to relate the story of a man to whom it has been granted, after bitter misfortunes, to experience the most subtle and secret things that the human understanding can attain. But it is more than the story of the life of a man; it is the life of a soul, of an heroic soul that is cruelly buffeted in its journey. It is the author's hope that the understanding of such a noble and lonely soul as that of Villalaz may inspire others with the ardent desire to attain to the wonders and favors which are purchased only by a soul chastened by sorrow. And surely in Don Fernando Villalaz is verified the fact that when sufferings and afflictions are endured in union with Christ's, the very tribulations and sorrows raise one to the realm of the spiritual where solace and encouragement are found.

Villalaz learns from the lives of those great Spanish mystics, Saint Theresa of Avila, Saint Peter of Alcantara, and Saint John of the Cross, the value of suffering, and is convinced that true love consists in loving everything, not for selfish motives, but with a real desire for sacrifice and humiliation; that one should love this present life, because in its hardships, privations, and sorrows the soul is tempered for future happiness and glory; and since in this life saints and heroes are made, one should lay hold of it and ceaselessly busy oneself in cultivating the human faculties which procure greater glory when the portals of death are entered.

The blind Villalaz, a true mystic, pos-

sessed of a magnanimous soul, is married to Doña Juana Flores, whom he sincerely loves. Juana, of humble station and consummate beauty, less well educated than he, less religiously inclined, worldly in outlook, dissatisfied with country life in the manorial dwelling of her husband, becomes enraged when he accepts into his home Felipe Crespo, an anarchist, a son of the faithful gardener of the Villalaz estate. Juana, a selfish, sensual, high-strung woman, soon changes her attitude toward the once-despised Felipe who has won her grace and good will by his flattery, and becomes the mother of his son. Don Fernando, unaware of all that has passed between his wife and the man he befriended, is overwhelmed with joy at the thought of a child being born into his household—the fulfillment of his life's dream.

The soul of Fernando, engulfed in grief at the knowledge that Fermín, the baby, is not his own, loses the joy that had so recently filled it at the restoration of his sight. Shortly after the departure of Juana to follow her lover, and the death of the baby, Don Fernando leaves the estate to take up the life of a pilgrim and a mendicant. As he journeys from place to place, the passers-by heap abuses and insults upon him. But this vagabond of God accepts all this as a sign of God's predilection, and cries out, "Thanks, O Lord, for now I begin to see by these signs that You accept the poor offering of my life for the faults of men! Burden me with glorious hardships; place me in hard captivity; afflict me with great suffering, until my soul breaks its fetters and flies to You like a butterfly!"

Villalaz, in his desire to serve his fellow-men for the love of God, asks to be allowed to take up his abode in a Hospital of Mercy, and to assist in the most lowly tasks in the service of the sick and the poor. Now we see him, known as Brother Fermín, healing the sores, alleviating the pains, comforting the souls, and cheering the hearts of those upon whom God has laid a heavy hand. The "holy man of the hos-

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pital," as he is called, lives a most abstemious, laborious, and rigorously penitential life, the result of which causes his health to weaken and fade. Because the townsfolk discover that he is a man of seniorial rank, he leaves the House of Mercy and travels the lands of Manzanares, Almagro, and La Mancha. Later we see him, now known as Fray Francisco de Jesús, kneeling in prayer in his humble cell in a Capuchin monastery in Seville, where he became a priest upon hearing that Juana had died repentant. One morning a lay-brother appears at the door of the cell and announces to Fray Francisco de Jesús that a priest has been summoned to go to the hospital to hear the confession of a dying man. The barefoot Capuchin friar makes his way to the pesthouse and is led by an attendant to a dismal room, in the corner of which a poor leper is lying. The dying leper makes his confession, and Fray Francisco recognizes Felipe Crespo over whom he pronounces the words of absolution, and then adds, "I, Francisco de Jesús, pardon you. I, Fernando de Villalaz, also pardon you. Why should not God pardon you?" The leper uttering a loud groan, falls back heavily upon the pillow, and renders his soul to his God. And that same day the priest, his soul filled with the love of God, departs for the missions of the Orient.

Ricardo León displays in this novel exceptional talent in portraying violent scenes, the vehemence and vividness of which the translators have preserved. An exemplification of this enviable ability is found in the scene in which Villalaz spreads his arms in the doorway in order to prevent Juana's entering the room where her little son, wasted by epilepsy, lies dying. The struggle, both physical and verbal, that ensues is particularly well done.

The incident in the mill, where Felipe's father, Pelayo Crespo, finds him and Juana together, is also a scene of violence which loses nothing of its force in translation, and is another one of the many excellent

manifestations of the translators' ability to catch the spirit of the author.

The striking contrasts in the delineation of character, in the reactions of the characters to the same situations and to other individuals are cleverly portrayed. Juana is a character unworthy of admiration, not only because of the depth to which her passions have led her, but also because she consistently reveals that she thirsts for domination, is wholly bent on attaining material things, and is completely selfish. She frequently gives vent to rage, even to the extent of tearing her hair, gnashing her teeth, stamping the floor, and flaying her husband with a violent tongue. Don Fernando, on the contrary, reveals himself as a strong personality who does not permit his wife to dominate him. He is merciful and mild, has a gentle and tender heart, and possesses the dignity of a prince and the pride of a soldier. From the beginning to the end of the novel Villalaz is charitable and beneficent to the needy, ever ready to forgive injuries and to accept suffering and sorrow in a spirit of resignation to the designs of Providence. His spirit of forgiveness reaches its culmination when he forgives Felipe Crespo, who, returning hatred for love, brought so much sorrow into his life.

Often throughout the novel, Ricardo León puts the elements of nature in tune with events or with feelings and emotions experienced by the characters, and at times he puts them into direct contrast. The conformity of nature with happenings and emotions is witnessed the night that the elder Crespo makes his way to the mill, entertaining the suspicion that he may find Felipe there. The night is icy and windy, the countryside and the trees are merged with the darkness, and Pelayo Crespo, lantern in hand, moves down the road by the river bank which is exposed to the full sweep of the wind. The trees are bending and swaying under the furious gale presenting the aspect of gigantic spectres nodding their heads in a dream. Gloom and solitude per-

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vade the mill; the millwheels and millstones are silent; the floor trembles above the roar and motion of the river.

The contrast of nature with events and passion is manifest in a scene in Juana's bedroom where, writing a letter to Felipe, she is suddenly interrupted by the entrance of Villalaz. In answer to his query on whom the letter is for, Juana, after a moment of dizziness, tells him that she is writing it for the maid who does not know how to write. A prolonged silence prevails in the room, while outside the rain pours, the wind howls, the lightning flashes, and suddenly a sharp, clattering sound begins at the windows, as if someone were pelting them with stones. It is hailing!

One of the most outstanding qualities of this novel is its style, although it has been criticized because it smacks too much of Fray Luis de Granada and San Juan de la Cruz. Perhaps it is true that Ricardo León does allow himself to be carried away by his delight in words, and at times becomes rather verbose. But, in spite of this possible defect, *The Wisdom of Sorrow*, a profoundly Spanish book, is one that will live. It is a magnificent portrayal of the mystic triumph of divine love over worldly love.

Professors Riley and Tunney in their translation of *El amor de los amores* under the title of *The Wisdom of Sorrow* have retained the local color of the original, and have vividly portrayed the struggle of a soul and its final liberation. This novel in translation loses little or nothing of the force and effectiveness of the original Spanish. The title of the translation is well chosen, for Don Fernando arrives at a knowledge of the supernatural and is shown the light of truth and through sorrow.

The translators of this novel, while adhering closely to the Spanish text, have rendered it in easy-flowing and rich English. They have truly caught the spirit and power of the original novel, and have made a definite contribution to literature and to those who may not be conversant with the

Spaniard, his Catholic faith, his race, and his language.

—SISTER M. FRANCIS DE SALES, S.L.

Webster College

André Suarès et Paul Claudel: Correspondance (1904-1938). Preface and notes by Robert Mallet. Paris: Gallimard. 1951.

On Aug. 5, 1907 Paul Claudel informed André Suarès that:

I maintain a spiritual correspondence with a good number of people who pretend that my works call them to religion. This business has not borne any great fruit up until now. As long as it is a matter of making phrases and displaying the beauty of the soul here and there, all goes well; but when I advise my correspondents to go to confession, they are deeply shocked and scatter. Their only goal is to believe in God, but in a discreet God; a God who is not troublesome, because He remains comfortably unknowable, a God who gives them the opportunity to indulge in "the integrating and harmonious development" of their fine nature. Nero alone achieved that. Jammes and Frizeau are the only two serious and upright souls whom I have known . . .

Now that an important part of this correspondence has been or is being published (and notably the letters to and from Rivière, Gide and Suarès), we are better able to appreciate the correctness of Claudel's diagnosis and to reach a more exact understanding of the nature and difficulties of literary conversions. The writer is, perhaps, the most self-conscious of beings: even in the sight of God, and with the best will in the world, it is not easy for him to forget that he is a man of letters. This is a truth which, upon converting such men as Jean Cocteau and Maurice Sachs, Jacques Maritain was painfully to rediscover.

Of the *belles âmes* to whom Claudel refers in the letter quoted above, only Jammes and Frizeau were to give him assurance that his confidence had not been misplaced, his labors not wasted. Charles-Louis Philippe was to die outside the Church, bequeathing to Claudel the eternal

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regret that the latter had, perhaps, insufficiently insisted. The unfortunate Rivière, after wavering for many years between the opposing influences of Gide and Claudel, was to end at last in a state of spiritual confusion and bankruptcy. The ambiguously Protestant fervor of Gide, in spite of occasional velleities towards Catholic certitudes, was to terminate in the most prosaic and depressing of negations. And Suarès, Jew by birth and hyper-romantic by temperament, was altogether to baffle Claudel's most sincere and strenuous proselytizing efforts.

André Suarès (1868-1948), a writer almost totally neglected in his own time, has not yet been "discovered" in ours. For a reader of this correspondence unacquainted with his writings and personality, the first impression is likely to be one of extreme irritation. Everything about the man appears to be pose, attitude, theatrical affectation. It is certain that he never wearied of dramatizing himself and his torments. The photograph of him published in this volume is that of an actor: a bandit or outlaw in some forgotten romantic melodrama, or a conspirator in some fifth-rate Italian opera—a conspirator rather ostentatiously conspiring. (The photograph of Claudel, on the contrary, suggests a very typically placid and stodgy French bourgeois.) Suarès speaks with entire complacency of "mes abîmes." He compares himself to "the sea-wind which uproots the trees and rocks of the shore, here and there, to the good country in the distance." He addresses Claudel thus:

I have you—and you have me. Who will grasp you, body and soul, as I do? I have sorrow and joy for you. I even partake of your sufferings, those particular sufferings that none may know without experiencing them. I feel a sympathy for your crimes, or for your sins, as you prefer to call them; this emotion comes from the bowels of complicity. I feel that you need me, or that you will need me—or I am an ignoramus. We have both lived in this solitude, this desert that has fostered for us mirages of passion that no one

is so capable as we of depicting; it is a voyage across the burned and burning countryside that we both know . . .

These lyrical explosions eventually induce in one a sense of fatigue and annoyance. What makes them still less bearable is the constant abuse of the vocabulary and concepts of religion, but a religion which seems above all a pretext for literary exploitation of religious themes à la Chateaubriand. One can understand and share Gide's initial reaction to this sort of writing as expressed in a letter to Claudel, who had undertaken to bring his two friends and potential converts together: "I have drawn the theme of exasperation from this book, and almost nothing else . . . What galls me more than anything is this sanctimonious *puffism*." Gide, it is true, was later to modify this judgment, as in turn Suarès was to attenuate the harshness of his own first impression of Gide and his work: "I did not know him; and I did not care to know him. The little that I read of his works neither struck nor charmed me. A very skillful mind, doubtlessly, and very perceptive; but without the strength to create anything, neither an idea, nor a form, much less a being. He is a Goethe, but for flies and ants." But the relations of Gide and Suarès would form the matter of another book, which will, let us hope, some day be published.

There is nothing very sympathetic about Suarès' violently expressed dislike of and estrangement from the people to whom by birth he belonged; about his perpetual Byronic posturing as *le grand solitaire* and *l'éternel incompris*; about his arrogant inability to admit himself under any circumstances mistaken. One's first impression is of a belated epigone of René and of even less reputable romantic heroes; of a delayed adolescence so self-complacent as to be forever incapable of transcending its cherished limitations.

This first impression would not be incorrect in and of itself. Suarès' weaknesses and his limitations are flagrantly obvious

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and peculiarly irritating. But one would be mistaken in supposing that, once having noted them, one had said all that there was to say about him.

One feels, first of all, that, in spite of his perpetual attitudinizing, and the rather hackneyed romanticism of these attitudes, Suarès was essentially an honest man. He really *did* refuse to compromise with those elements which, in the life and literature surrounding him, he considered ignoble and unworthy of him; and he *did*, as a direct consequence of this refusal to compromise (although lacking private means), forego all chance of "success" in his own lifetime. His love of what he deemed the best in art (and in life as related to art) was sincere and exalted. He is often sublime, often bathetic, never mediocre.

His judgments on men and works, even when exaggerated and unjust, reveal authentic and valuable insights. Of his own time he prophetically remarks that "The age is not even infamous: it is chaos. No choice, no plan, no order. It is Trimalchio at his dessert, presiding over his academy . . ." And furthermore: "We dwell among those possessed by carnal reason . . . But if the fanatics of reason had had the slightest instinct for their own interests, they would not have deprived themselves of religious sisterhoods. They will shortly see what a world is when it is given over to women, to the women who are without religion." His caricatures of Barrès ("un homme qui fait semblant d'être Chateaubriand, parce qu'il est bâtard de l'eunuque du dernier Abencerage") and of Maurras ("si quelqu'un ressemble à ce maudit rasoir de Robespierre, c'est Maurras") are cruelly perspicacious. He is capable of appreciating grandeur where it exists; and he is not taken in by secondary and tertiary reputations, however skilfully inflated (not once in this entire correspondence, for example, does he so much as mention the name of Anatole France).

In a number of his judgments, in fact, he shows himself spiritually akin to his

correspondent, so much so that there is some appearance of justification for his writing to the latter: "Rien de ce qui nous sépare . . . n'importe autant que ce qui nous unit." He was, of course, mistaken: what *did* hopelessly divide them was Suarès' final inability to accept the religious certitudes which Claudel was so eager to offer him. The central drama in this correspondence (as in the letters exchanged between Claudel and Gide) was that of a conversion passionately sought for, desperately unaccomplished and bitterly regretted.

In the long siege which he laid to Suarès' soul (the metaphor is Claudel's own), the Catholic poet manifested a patience and a humility which, in a temperament so passionate, emphatic and unyielding, in a nature so little tolerant of error, seem more than a little surprising. He apologizes for a movement of irritation expressed in a preceding letter: "ce n'est pas une raison parce qu'on ne peut amener les gens à Dieu de les envoyer au diable!" He admits with Suarès that, intellectually and artistically, his fellow-Catholics (as Huysmans and Léon Bloy had already been at pains to point out) are not a luminous lot:

It is certain that we Catholics are not a shining group, and that our intelligence and taste in art leaves something to be desired. *It is confounding to think that we alone possess the truth* [italics mine]. Rest assured that, when I chose my new faith, I was not very proud to take my place in the procession of muttonheads. I saw later the gentle and beautiful virtues which are hidden behind this not too attractive façade, which alone is visible from without. But the words of Our Lord are always true: the shining drachma is found in the filth; and the word of Saint Paul, *peripsema eius mundi*; also, *gentibus autem stultitia*. Obviously, I should prefer that Adam's Noël or Gounod's *Ave Maria* were not sung. (This, of course, had been the very problem—a painful and immediate problem—confronting the newly converted Newman. It would be rash to pretend that, in our own time, it no longer exists.)

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The very evident attraction towards and feeling for religious verities which Claudel had seemed to discern in Suarès' writings—the sufferings of a soul of uncommon quality deprived of God and unable to do without Him—had determined Claudel to leave nothing undone to aid his friend in arriving ultimately at the haven of truth. The latter's books seemed to indicate a nature predisposed to receive and assimilate those Christian and Catholic verities. No obstacle existed in the form of attachment to the practices—or belief in the doctrines—of another religion. Why, then, did Suarès continue to resist? Why, like Gide, did he refuse to consult Claudel's confessor? Why was the "siege" so entirely unsuccessful that Claudel seemed unable to make the slightest breach in his friendly opponent's defenses? He could only suppose that the difficulty in the way of belief must consist in Suarès' lingering respect for the apparent certitudes of "science," or in the exaggerated respect in which he held Art ("l'Art, éternel ennemi des artistes"), or, finally, in an exorbitant and inexorable pride. Suarès, on the other hand, continued to complain that Claudel did not understand him and to insist that the Catholic poet accept him as he was, without undertaking to change him (precisely the thing which Claudel could not possibly have done). The result was a complete deadlock.

The siege lasted for about ten years. Understanding at last that his hopes could never approach realization, that, in fact, in another twenty or thirty years he would find Suarès precisely where he had left him, Claudel gave up the struggle. There was no dramatic climax, as in the case of his other great *conversion manquée*, that of Gide. But, after 1914, the friendship tapered off: the two men seldom saw and rarely wrote to one another. When Suarès died in 1948 all contact had long since lapsed. But their correspondence (capably edited by M. Mallet) subsists, admirable monument to a friendship which, if finally

frustrated, adds something to the stature of both writers.

Hobart College —JOHN H. MEYER

Et Nunc manet in te, suivi de Journal intime. By André Gide. Neufchâtel et Paris: Ides et Calenders.*

André Gide: The Ethic of the Artist. By K. L. Thomas. London: Secker and Warburg.

André Gide. By Albert J. Guerard. The Harvard University Press. \$4.00.

Je dois à André Gide. By Lucien Combelle. Paris: Frédéric Chambriand.

L'Envers du Journal de Gide: Tunis, 1942-1943. By François Derais and Henri Rambaud. Paris: le Nouveau Portique.

Yale French Studies, Number Seven: André Gide. 1951.

I cannot recall, in the entire published work of André Gide, pages more moving and tragic than those contained in the first of his posthumous books. I do not believe that, in any of his other writings, centered as they largely are upon his own actions and problems, he portrays himself with a candor quite so pitiless and devastating. *Et nunc manet in te* is a record of an *acte gratuit*, as Mr. Thomas rightly terms it—perhaps the supreme *acte gratuit* of its author's existence—his marriage, and of the hideously corrosive consequences of that act upon the life of another person. Oscar Wilde, Gide's mentor and friend of early North African days, once wrote, with a depth of insight perhaps not yet adequately appreciated, that "each man kills the thing he loves." Like Thomas Carlyle, like Havelock Ellis, André Gide destroyed—but only after an interminable agony—the woman he married. This little book is a gesture of atonement. It is Gide's *Ballad of Reading Gaol*.

On Oct. 8, 1895, shortly after his mother's death, André Gide married his cousin, Madeleine Rondeaux (to whom, in his writings, he usually refers as Emmanuèle or Em.). Very few people have

*To be read only with permission.

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known much about Mme. Gide: most of the entries concerning her had of necessity been excised from the *Journal*. In *Si le grain ne meurt* one glimpsed her importance in the writer's life, while it was obvious that such of his heroines as the Emmanuèle of *André Walter*, the Marceline of *l'Immoraliste* and the Alissa of *la Porte étroite* owed her a great deal. One was familiar with Gide's doctrine of the dissociation of love from desire: the union had been, then, a *mariage blanc*. In 1930 he had related the story of *la Séquestrée de Poitiers*. The present book is an account of *la Recluse de Cuverville*, whose seclusion lasted forty-three years. As if to preserve to the very end a certain consistency in their relations, he was not with her when she died.

To these pages, written shortly after her death in 1938, he added a certain number of the portions omitted from the *Journal*. The volume was printed in 1947 in a private edition of thirteen copies. There were, after all, things which he did not feel free to publish in his own lifetime. (It was true that, in *les Caves du Vatican*, he had, in his account of the union of Amédée Fleurissoire and Arnica Péterat, already treated in a tone of farce the theme of the "spiritualized" marriage. That farce takes on, in view of the present revelations, a note of rather grim irony.)

Gide has always proclaimed and reiterated: "J'ai le mensonge en horreur." In the light of what he now discloses about his marriage, this affirmation assumes, retrospectively, a disturbing ambiguity. Was it, one asks oneself, knowing what he knew about his own nature, altogether honest of Gide to impose upon a woman who loved him a marriage relationship so entirely "idealized" and "etherealized," and to take for granted, in so doing, that she would find it as satisfying as he did? For it was his choice, not hers: she was not informed of the facts and permitted to make her own decision in full awareness of the necessary consequences of that decision: Gide himself states that "entre nous, jamais

une explication ne fut tentée." But, if he abstained from explicit avowals, he could not help knowing that, eventually, she must see the situation as it was and for what it was. We are able to trace in these pages the appalling consequences of that realization. It destroyed her, but not, it would seem, until she had exhausted the possibilities of suffering.

In his *Journal* of May 7, 1906, Gide wrote: "Je me défie de l'honnêteté d'un sentiment dès que ce sentiment peut me servir." Perhaps not invariably. Perhaps not, more specifically, when "le mensonge," disguised by virtue of some convenient sophism, offered itself as truth. For, as he states in the present volume:

I am astonished today at this aberration which led me to believe that the more ethereal my love was, the more worthy it was of her—holding on to this innocence of never wondering whether a completely fleshless love would content her. So I had no misgivings about directing my desires elsewhere. *And I even persuaded myself comfortably that things were better like this.* Desire, I thought, is proper to man: *it was reassuring to me not to admit that woman could have similar feelings; or only women "of easy morals" . . . [my italics]*

His wife would have welcomed a child: "No doubt I told myself (and with what remorse!) that she would have wished to be a mother, but I also told myself that we should not be able to agree on the children's education, and that other worries and disappointments would have been the price of maternity for her . . ." Yet he recognizes that "Those worries, those cares would have been at least only normal. I still nurture the remorse of having falsified her destiny . . ."

André Gide was eventually to add to his collection the experience of paternity; but another woman was to bear his child. Yet clearly he *did* find it to his advantage to convince himself that this arrangement must be as satisfactory to his wife as it was to himself, that it was in fact the best of all possible arrangements. For his ethic of "joy" implied necessarily a constant un-

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derlying optimism, just as his cult of "sincerity" posited of necessity a constant underlying honesty. Only by virtue of such a "solution" was he able to preserve his optimism inviolate and never to question his own sincerity.

But what *were* the advantages which accrued to him from it? In the first place, a necessary (if intermittent) stability and tranquillity. However prolonged and however frequent his wanderings, the prodigal was assured of a home to come back to. A means of eating one's cake and having it, an enrichment of the personality in that it rendered unnecessary a renunciation of anything at all. A centripetal force to counteract centrifugal impulses, delicious and joyfully welcomed, but which might, if altogether unchecked, totally disperse, disintegrate, destroy him.

In the second place, it served the purposes of art. As Gide wrote to André Rouveyre in 1926:

"The question of homosexuality does not have any great importance for me in itself . . . For it is not the fact of being a homosexual that is important, but of having established one's life as if one were not homosexual. This is the factor which necessitates dissimulation, trickery, and . . . art."

We are unlikely ever to know just how much Gide's art owes to his wife. But we feel her ever present, if only indirectly, in the work of his creative maturity; and we are cruelly aware of the qualitative inferiority of the writings of his old age, when he had little left to conceal, and the presence of "Emmanuèle" had faded to the dimmest of shadows.

And, finally, it was necessary that there be someone with whom he might deposit "le meilleur de moi-même." Only "le meilleur," of course; for ought one to give—and ought the recipient reasonably to expect—the best *and* something else beside?

Mme. Gide accepted the situation. "De sa part," her husband tells us, "jamais une plainte; rien qu'une résignation muette et un déboire inavoué." Only once during the

forty-three years that the marriage endured, did she rebel. In 1918, feeling herself altogether abandoned, in a crisis of intolerable suffering and despair, she destroyed all the letters she had ever received from him. When Gide learned of it, he was inconsolable. For a week he wept unceasingly. "C'est le meilleur de moi qui disparaît," he moaned: "Peut-être n'y eut-il jamais plus belle correspondance." The loss of these letters was to remain one of the great sorrows and frustrations of his life.

It is certain that, if Gide had divorced love from desire, he had never dissociated life from literature. His marriage was, indeed, an attempt at an indissoluble fusion of the two: "For the entire effort of my love was not so much to bring myself closer to her as to make her come closer to this ideal image which I was inventing. At least that is how it seems to me today; and I do not think that Dante did otherwise for Beatrice . . ." (But Dante did not make the blunder of *marrying* Beatrice.)

M. Combelle remarks acutely that ". . . no one will be able to describe the part that Mme. Gide played in her husband's life. Saint and guinea pig? Let the zealous disciple be wary in the future: literature and life, even if considered in connection with genius, are two hostile sisters . . ." Saint and guinea pig? However great his talent, however mighty and enduring his work, has *anyone* actually the right to *make use of* another human being as Gide made use of his wife?

The matter of Gide's marriage raises the whole question of his sincerity. I do not believe that it is possible to give a glib and simple answer. I am convinced that his love for his wife was sincere and that, at the moment of writing *Et nunc manet in te*, his remorse was equally sincere. At the same time, I am not persuaded that, even if he had been able to foresee the most disastrous consequences of his experiment, he would have acted otherwise than he did. But, after all, the problem remains: how completely sincere is it possible for any

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man to be or become? Is it possible for literary artists so self-conscious as, for example, Jean-Jacques Rousseau and André Gide, even to approximate authentic sincerity? Can the artist see himself as he truly is? And, even if he were able to see himself as he really is, could he conceivably tell *everything*? The omissions (whether deliberate or involuntary) will be significant; so will the literary arrangement given to those facts which the artist elects to relate. Between the "truth" as composed by the artist and simple factual truth, just how close is the resemblance likely to be? But does not the very strain induced by the effort to attain integral sincerity evoke of necessity a variety of hypocrisy all the more insidious because usually unrecognized and unrecognizable?

There is a final irony in the publication of this book. Gide's gesture of atonement represents, perhaps, what would have seemed, to a woman so reticent and self-effacing as his wife, who shrank from any sort of notoriety or publicity, the ultimate outrage. Nothing would have distressed her more than to be presented between the covers of a book as a victim to be pitied and, in a sense, pawed over. We may be grateful that she was spared the certainty of a literary survival which would have seemed to her, no doubt, the final turn of the screw.

The problem raised by *Et nunc manet in te*—that of the ethic of the artist—is excellently treated in Mr. Thomas' book. The author's concern is, of course, critical rather than clinical: he is interested in biographical details only insofar as they form a necessary complement to an understanding of Gide's ethics as reflected in his art. It must, however, be admitted that Gide's own insistence upon the facts of his private life has made it impossible for his critics *not* to take account of them; and that it has, perhaps, fuddled for a long time to come any adequate appreciation of his achievement *as* artist, the achievement by virtue of which he seems assured of a measure of

immortality in literature. But it remains true, as Gide himself has recognized, that "le point de vue esthétique est le seul où il faille se placer pour parler de mon œuvre sainement."

It is in *Paludes*, Mr. Thomas observes, that one finds the first mature formulation of Gide's ethic. The psychology of the *acte gratuit* (to be developed more explicitly in *le Prométhée mal enchaîné* and *les Caves du Vatican*) with its underlying strain of inhumanity; the doctrine of liberation (to be so eloquently formulated in *les Nourritures terrestres* and *l'Immoraliste*); the emphasis on becoming to the exclusion of being; the Manichaean dualism; the notion of a voluptuous complicity *dans le mal*; the refusal of choice, in the name of a perpetual *disponibilité*; the rejection of metaphysics, history, logic, philosophy, as well as of any notion of moral responsibility—Gide's entire doctrine is present, whether avowed or implicit, in his work from the very beginning.

The rather vague pantheism of *les Nourritures terrestres* is complicated by certain religious strains deriving directly from the Gospels, and notably by the notion of *dénûment*—renunciation. The sophistry implicit in the use Gide makes of this notion is that the things which Nathanaël is invited to "give up" are precisely the things from which Gide is anxious to liberate himself and which, as obstacles in the way of free and harmonious development of the personality, he loathes. The institutions of home, family, law, religion, as well as obligation and responsibility of any sort—these things, which are anathema to Gide, are the things which his disciple is invited to "renounce." Not, surely, so very terrible a sacrifice. Law, for example, with its prohibitions and restrictions, is, Gide asserts, an invention of St. Paul, creator of the Church: in the Gospels, on the other hand, he claims to discover an invitation to total freedom, a freedom which may legitimately take the form of license and even anarchy. "Virtue" is the ultimate, the most deadly,

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the supreme temptation which must, at whatever cost, be overcome. It is in the name of this doctrine of total liberation that Gide will seek admittance to the fold of communism, hoping to find in the doctrines of the Comrades the Christianity of the Gospels as it pleases him to interpret them.

Proceeding, with a few exceptions, chronologically, Mr. Thomas traces the evolution of this ethic. His analyses of individual works are illuminating. He points out, for example, that Gide's own characterization of such of his *réécits* as, for example, *la Symphonie pastorale* and *Isabelle* as "satirical" is, to say the least, equivocal. His feeling towards the pastor in *la Symphonie* is essentially one of complicity: what Gide is really satirizing is his sentimental protagonist's inability to liberate himself fully and finally from the straitjacket of traditional morality and to achieve joyous fulfillment of desires conventionally inhibited. In *Isabelle*, similarly, what is being satirized is not so much the extravagances of romanticism proper as Gérard's attachment to an outmoded and ridiculous past, in which Gide sees an obstacle to unlimited realization of the present.

What this ethic adds up to, then, is an entire negation of all ethics traditionally accepted. It means, when its implications and consequences are fully examined, escape from any sort of moral restraint, "bad" because "artificial" and, therefore, "insincere." Only by giving entire satisfaction to all of one's impulses and desires can one hope to achieve complete sincerity. Responsibility, order, tradition, all these things hinder the free development of the individual. Morality must be viewed as a dependency of aesthetics. It is interesting to recall where, his creative powers once exhausted, this ethic of liberation finally led Gide: to a particularly dreary and conformist nonconformism of negation.

This, then, would be the ethic of the pure artist; and such a one, Mr. Thomas feels, Gide very patently was—a member,

in fact, of the spiritual family of Mozart. Perhaps not all artists would accept this notion of pure art as existing in, so to speak, an ethical void. They might argue that an art thus existing would be so narrowed and impoverished as scarcely to deserve the name of art at all, or that, at best, it could be no more than strictly minor art. But this conception of the artist and his function does represent, in any event, an extreme form of romanticism: a recrudescence, in fact, of the ancient "art for art's sake" doctrine. In a time of stultified and wooden complacency and security, Gide's ethic of art might prove valuable as a spiritual goad and stimulant. In an era of demoralization, disintegration, demolition, on the other hand—an era like our own—such an ethic, for all its reiterated optimism and confidence in "progress," approximates more nearly an ethic of despair.

Professor Guerard feels that, on the contrary, uncomfortably close as we are to the total conformism of Mr. Orwell's world of 1984, it is, perhaps, only by virtue of such "demoralizers" as André Gide that we stand any chance of salvation. Towards Mr. Thomas' book, Professor Guerard's tone is both critical (though not always perceptively so) and condescending: he finds in it a "Victorian innocence and grace." I believe Mr. Thomas' book to be the better of the two; but I should not wish to minimize the real merits of Professor Guerard's study.

His concern is, primarily, with "the development of the modern novel, and . . . the modern novelist's perplexities"; his general intention ". . . to record the impulse away from orthodox realism, classical psychology, and conventional structure; or, the impulse toward the somber and ironic distortions, the psychological explorations, and the dislocations in form of many novelists writing in the middle of the twentieth century." With this as his guiding principle, he has undertaken studies of Hardy, Conrad and Gide.

He has, in the first place, in the notes

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and appendices as well as in the text of the present book, provided us with certain useful factual data. To a serviceable chronological table are added two letters from Gide to the author himself, in which Gide's own considered judgments of this study are set forth. Professor Guerard's recollections of two personal interviews are well told: one has an extraordinarily vivid picture of the Master in extreme old age, in the final years of weariness and fame.

The secret of Gide's art lies, for Professor Guerard, in the tension created by the pull of two contrary impulses: the one toward protection, the other toward dissolution, of the writer's ego. He makes abundant and, on the whole, defensible use of Freudian tools and terms: the results are interesting. In a long analysis of *le Voyage d'Urien*, for example, a work not usually accorded much attention by Gide's critics, he stresses the homosexuality latent in the imagery of this symbolist tale of travels through polar seas. He rates *l'Immoraliste* as the most completely successful of Gide's books—as, in fact, his major literary achievement, the culminating point of his art. To Gide himself this estimation appeared exaggerated; and I believe that, on this point, most readers and critics are more likely to agree with Gide than with Professor Guerard. But *l'Immoraliste* remains one of Gide's essential books; and Professor Guerard's appreciation and understanding of it are valuable and unhackneyed. He lays, perhaps, insufficient stress upon the stark cruelty implied in Michel's ethics of "liberation."

The concluding part of the book is devoted to a study of Gide's "influence": a cardinal matter, for, ever since the era of the *Jugements* of Massis, Gide's detractors have never ceased to emphasize his role as a "corruptor of youth": in so doing, they have not intended to suggest Socratic parallels. In this connection Professor Guerard examines at some length the notorious "case" of Jacques Rivière. He concludes that, while Gide is in a true sense a repre-

sentative figure of his own time, he is rather a "disturber" than a "corruptor," and that, as such, once proper qualifications have been made, his influence has been valuable rather than nefarious. "It could hardly be possible," he reflects, "to overestimate the benefits an American André Gide would confer."

M. Combelle's book is culled from a mass of notations jotted down during the year and a half (1937-1938) of his service as Gide's secretary. These are *not* the embittered outpourings of a second Jean-Jacques Brousson: there is no attempt to present an André Gide "en pantoufles." M. Combelle, an ex-disciple of Maurras, came to Gide by way of Gourmont and Léautaud. Although associated with Gide toward the end of the writer's most active period of "leftist" political activity, M. Combelle's own sympathies were with "rightist" totalitarian movements. During the war, closely associated with Drieu la Rochelle, he "collaborated" with the Nazi government of occupation, an error of judgment which, after 1945, he expiated by several years of imprisonment. It is much to Gide's credit that, when Combelle's fortunes had thus touched bottom, the aged great man not only did not cast him off but continued to write him friendly and encouraging letters.

These attentions were not wasted upon their recipient. While by no means uncritical—for these notes have a malicious acuteness which makes them highly readable—the qualities in Gide which M. Combelle elects to stress are the kindness and generosity (interesting in view of the generally accredited legend of Gide's avarice), the remarkably youthful vigor and perceptiveness, and, above all, the extraordinary charm of the seventy year-old Master.

L'Envers du Journal d'André Gide is just about the sort of thing which its title would lead one to expect. Its preface, however, is not. This long and unctuous introductory discourse, by Professor Henri

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Rimbaud, contains some valid insights (I refer specifically to his discussion of Gide's sincerity). He is preparing a volume on *Le Drame spirituel d'André Gide*. Yet he counseled publication, and undertook to present in as favorable a light as possible the rather shabby and trivial document which forms the major part of the book, as well as the still more shabby and trivial author of it. His attitude remains, therefore, curiously ambivalent.

François Derais (the patronymic, with its ambiguous connotations, is, it seems, a pseudonym) is none other than the "Victor" of whom, in his *Journal*, 1942-1949, Gide drew so devastating a portrait. Once recovered from the initial shock of annihilation, "Victor" aspired to retaliate. His book, in the form of a long letter to Gide, is concerned uniquely with the trivial, a sufficient guarantee of its absolute authenticity. It could have been written only by the "Victor" portrayed in the *Journal*. The *pièce de résistance* of this concoction is the accusation that, one summer afternoon, Gide delivered an unsuccessful assault upon the citadel of his virtue (or, as Richardson's Pamela would have pronounced it, his *varieté*). We cannot feel that, in any event, this incident has any very great importance, and our sympathies remain with "Victor's" victims: his grandmother Chacha, the maid Jeanne, the exiled Gide. For "Victor" reveals himself so thoroughly odious that we can only feel that Gide, in the picture he drew of him, deliberately understated the case in the interest of common credibility.

One may regret that Gide chose to magnify these *petites misères* by recording and publishing them. Once he had done so, it was, of course, proper that his opponent be given an opportunity to defend himself. Both accusation and defense are likely before very long to be relegated where they belong: among the trivia of literary history. The ironical aspect of this entire ignoble interlude resides in the circumstance that, in a sense, "Victor" represents an authentic

caricature of the Gidian hero, a sub-Lafcadio of a sort, divested of the Lafcadian elegance and wit but with an exaggerated share of that coldness and cruelty.

The Gide number of the *Yale French Studies* is noteworthy for the unusual quality of the essays. All of the contributors have something to say, and very little of it is banal. As a subject for critical study, André Gide, that tireless traveller, has clearly "arrived" in the America whose shores he never saw.

—JOHN H. MEYER

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Le sagouin. By François Mauriac. Paris: Plon. Trans. by Gerard Hopkins, as *The Weakling*, pub. with *The Enemy* by Pellegrini & Cudahy. \$5.00.

The Desert of Love. By François Mauriac. Trans. by Gerard Hopkins. Pellegrini & Cudahy. \$3.00.

Men I Hold Great. By François Mauriac. Trans. by Elsie Pell. Philosophical Library. \$3.00.

La pierre d'achoppement. By François Mauriac. Monaco: Rocher. Trans. as *The Stumbling Block*. Philosophical Library. \$2.75.

Claudel, Mauriac et Cie, "Catholiques de littérature". By R. P. Valentin-Breton, Luc J. Lefèvre, and François Ducaud-Bourget. Paris: L'Ermite.

Le catholicisme dans l'oeuvre de François Mauriac. By Robert J. North. Paris: Conquistador.

Exactly ten years have elapsed since Mauriac published what appeared to many to be his last novel, *La pharisienne* (1941). The belief was widespread that the great Catholic author had forsaken the genre which had won for him an enviable place in the world of letters for the drama and a more active participation in politics through his bi-weekly column in the conservative newspaper *Le Figaro*. Some critics had detected in the later novels signs of exhaustion of a vein from which the author had drawn most of his themes.

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Le sagouin (*The Weakling*) does not mark any startling departure from the tendencies which had characterized Mauriac's technique. It is still fundamentally a somber picture of the "misery of man without God," scarcely alleviated by a vague note of hope, more in the form of a wistful desire than of a stated belief, in the everlasting providence of an infinite Being. The main characters who, in spite of the title, are the mother and the father of the urchin belong rightfully to the "Mauriac's family," so varied and yet uniquely marked by a dominant, almost hereditary trait: a pathetic weakness before temptation, particularly the temptation of the flesh. Yet *Le sagouin* introduces an interesting, if not notable, innovation. Mauriac, who so far had been primarily the novelist of adolescence, becomes here, or rather attempts to become, the novelist of childhood. French writers, with the exception of Alphonse Daudet, have not been too successful in depicting the drama of the unhappy child and few have been attracted by that challenging subject. Mauriac has not solved more conclusively than his predecessors the many difficulties attached to the psychological analysis of a child. Thus Guillou, who is theoretically the hero of the novel, is left in the background while the author concentrates his attention on the better delineated characters who surround him. Guillou is an unwanted, unloved child who leads a forlorn existence among his mother Paule, who detests him, his father Galéas, a weakling, incapable of giving his son the protection he needs so desperately, and his grandmother, the baroness of Cernès, who reserves her affection for her other, more refined grandchildren living in Paris. Guillou is the innocent victim of a mismatched marriage. His fate was, so to speak, fore-ordained when Paule, attracted by the prestige of a title of nobility, married Galéas only to realize almost immediately that she loathed him. The child, now twelve, is retarded physically and mentally, and is expelled from two schools. His family con-

siders him a moron. Yet, the spark which, unknown to all, is there, will be kindled when the family in utter desperation entrusts the child to the local grade school teacher rather notorious for his communistic affiliations. In an atmosphere of kindness and understanding, Guillou blossoms out; for the first time in his young life, he tastes happiness. When the teacher, tardily conscious of the obligations imposed upon him by the class struggle, refuses to receive the boy again, Guillou walks to the nearby river and drowns himself, followed in his miserable fate, but also in his deliverance, by his father.

Le sagouin will not be numbered among Mauriac's great novels, and one has only to compare this latest work with, for instance, *Le désert de l'amour*, to realize its shortcomings. The psychological analysis, which is elsewhere Mauriac's most superb achievement, is here rather superficial, hampered by the shortness of the novel as well as by the nature of the subject. The personality of Laura dominates that "viper's nest," a revolting creature, an unnatural mother, depraved, and yet, like most of Mauriac's characters, pitiful. On the surface, God plays no role at all in *Le sagouin*, and this novel is certain to revive the everlasting controversy about the Catholic novel. In fact, the author's avowed technique of demonstrating the misery of man without God and thus proposing a thesis based on the absence of religion is gravely weakened by the spectacle of the Bordas family, the Godless teacher, where reign happiness, satisfaction and peace. In the end, however, Bordas' complacency will be stung too by the remorse of that double death that he has unwittingly caused. But that presentation is far from forceful and conclusive since it deals with a natural feeling quite independent from that horrible vacancy experienced by other creatures of Mauriac, a vacancy which will be filled only by the gratuitous grant of light and repentance.

The Desert of Love is undoubtedly one

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of Mauriac's most meritorious novels, along with the *Le fleuve de feu* and *Thérèse Desqueyroux*, and it is fortunate that it is at long last available to the American public. Mauriac's popularity in Anglo-Saxon countries has long been overshadowed by that of Proust, Gide and even of Maupassant. The author himself attributes to Graham Greene this sudden outburst of interest in his work manifested by an increased number of translations. The difficulties involved in that task are well illustrated in Gerard Hopkins' excellent rendition. He has happily overcome most of them, presenting a precise, almost linear translation which involves only occasional sacrifices of elegance. He has followed all the intricacies of Mauriac's thought and has thus succeeded in analysing rather complex *états d'âme*. The translator has not infrequently stumbled against the slang which peppers the narration. Thus *cet animal*, a very common and even friendly term in familiar conversation, is not accurately translated by "that swine," but would be by some such expression as "that rascal." "He was not looking his best" does not exactly depict the person who has *sa tête des pires jours*, and *un corps ramassé* does not mean "a shrunken body" but a compact, heavy body. These incidental failures, however, do not detract anything essential from the very real worth of the translation.

La pierre d'achoppement (*The Stumbling Block*) gathers under that loose title a series of articles published in the review *La table ronde*, at the beginning of 1948. They are strictly personal and subjective considerations on various religious problems. Mauriac is prompt to warn his readers, and particularly his Protestant readers, that they should not be scandalized by or gloat upon the apparently rebellious tone of some of his remarks. He declares forcefully his obedience to the Church on matters of faith, but he claims his right to distinguish between the Church of God and the temporal church and to expose

what he believes to be the failings of the latter. Along these lines, those familiar with Mauriac's attitude on many contemporary questions know that he is not disposed to indulgence. He has been a frequent critic of the Catholic hierarchy notably in connection with the Spanish Civil War and the Pétain Regime. In these articles, he deplores that consecrated persons so easily hold truck with the world, that they have diluted the sublime wisdom of the Cross with the short-sighted wisdom of those who envisage only temporal ends. The normal state for the Church of Christ is not one where she is protected by temporal powers but on the contrary one of persecution. He deems unworthy of those who possess eternal truths to accept so easily, or to condone in the faithful, the fanciful interpretations or practices verging on superstition. Mauriac appears to be irritated by the pomp of the Catholic hierarchy and even of the liturgy. He has some cruel words for the clergy whom he calls the "administrators of Revelation," and for the great religious orders whose snobbery is not very different from that of the Jockey Club.

These rancors and bickerings within the family of Christ, which might be shocking to Catholics in America hardly ever critical of their clergy, are not so unusual in France. The literature of the Middle Ages is remarkable by a Gallic streak which is often of the same apparently anticlerical inspiration. Mauriac has many times, and here again, confessed his antipathy for theological discussions which have never enlightened nor strengthened his faith. Therefore he does not face these, after all, secondary problems from a dogmatic point of view but simply proposes reflections which are valid only for himself. He knows that they can easily be disproved, that the paths toward God are varied. He realizes that processions and devotion to particular saints, which to him appear childish, are a consolation to many people. The good faith of the author is attested by

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the fact that he often answers himself the objections that he has proposed. All these reflections are inspired mainly by a passionate desire to seek the spiritual and eternal God who promises no earthly rewards.

Men I Hold Great (*Mes grands hommes*) could rightly be called an intellectual biography of François Mauriac, and thus considered it is a happy complement to the author's various autobiographical works and to the four volumes of his *Journal*. These articles deal mostly with writers whom we already know, through other sources, to be Mauriac's favorites. The very title, particularly the French title, indicates that we do not deal here with literary criticism as understood today, but with an approach to literature from the heart. Thus Mauriac's preferences are essentially subjective, and the reasons he offers have no validity except for himself. The writers involved are great in Mauriac's eyes because, like Pascal, they have helped him at a difficult time of his adolescence; or because, like Rousseau, they have revealed to him a new aspect of human nature; or again because, like Eugénie de Guérin, they have offered him an example of sacrifice accepted for a spiritual end. It is true, of course, that the qualities which Mauriac admires in his writers have in them at least the germ of universal values; but they are considered by him only in their affective connotation, as related to his own sensibility. Pascal is naturally the first; Pascal whom we have come to recognize in many of Mauriac's reactions toward an evil world; Pascal whose *Pensées*, in the Brunschwig edition, have always accompanied Mauriac since his early youth. In this essay, Mauriac attempts to rediscover a Pascal quite contrary to the traditional pessimistic character, not the cold mathematician nor the Jansenist weighed down by preoccupation with original sin, but the man accessible to friendship, to worldly interests, even to sensual and passionate love. Mauriac settles without hesitation, by an argument which appears to involve a

vicious circle, the much contested authenticity of the *Discours sur les passions de l'amour*, on the ground that only a man who had the actual experience of love could have written that work. He draws a striking contrast between Pascal and Molière, between the sensitive Pascal and the bitter Molière, to show that the real misanthropist was the latter. Molière, in claiming the right to yield to all the urges of nature, has sinned against nature. To Rousseau, Mauriac adopts substantially the attitude expressed by Maritain, tempering its severity with a feeling of pity. Rousseau, too, recognizes nature as his only master, and the same illusion leads him to the same excesses. Mauriac sees through these mendacious and yet sincere declarations which excuse the most despicable acts because "they were intentionally good." We could expect that the severe critic of hypocrisy under its most cunning disguises, the painter of the *Woman of the Pharisees*, would not have countenanced Chateaubriand's obvious lack of sincerity when he was writing *The Genius of Christianity* in the bedroom of Mme. de Beaumont. But besides the shortcomings of his conduct, Mauriac detects also the weakness of Chateaubriand's *Apology*, a weakness already indicated in some passages of *La pierre d'achoppement*. He shows only the charm, the poetry, the esthetic beauty of Christianity. He hides the Cross, the spirit of sacrifice which is the real message of the Church, and thus prepares that complacency for the world, that readiness to compromise which Mauriac denounces in the Christians of today. Flaubert has replaced God by art, and to that false god he has devoted his life. To art, which does not repay such immolation, he has sacrificed his family, his friends, his comfort, his peace of mind. God is absent from his books as He is absent from his life, and his psychology, therefore, reaches only the outer surface of the soul. In his hatred of the bourgeois, Flaubert has never realized that the most despicable of them possesses an immortal

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soul. In Loti, Mauriac sees the haunting fear of death, an unreasonable fear which resists any argument, echoing miserably in a soul deprived of the consolation of God. By depicting the noblest and the vilest hearts, Gide enlightens us on ourselves and may thus prepare the way of divine Grace. Mauriac has remained faithful to the memory of Barrès, who was one of his early masters. But his predilection remains with a lesser known writer, Eugénie de Guérin, to whom he devotes some of the most touching pages of this essay. She is the example of the perfect Christian who has achieved progressively a most complete and a most painful renunciation to even the most legitimate pleasures of the world. It would be difficult to find a common ground among all these authors, of different times, of different inspiration and modes of expression. They are bound together here only by the affection that Mauriac has bestowed on all of them, and by the help they have somehow offered him in the solution of his personal problems.

There is absolutely nothing to be said in favor of the rash, unfair, and often scurrilous criticism of the greatest Catholic writers (*Claudé, Mauriac et Cie*) from the pen of a priest, a director of Catholic Action and a Franciscan monk. Such a work deserves in fact nothing but a scornful silence were it not that that might create doubt in some uninformed minds. We do not pretend, of course, that Claudé, Mauriac and the other authors savagely attacked here should be exempt from criticism on the part of Catholics merely because they are themselves Catholic. It is, on the contrary, essential for the integrity of Catholic criticism that it judge Catholic writers on esthetic and even on moral grounds just as impartially as it would judge any other writer. The six articles of Father Ducaud-Bourget which constitute the bulk of this small volume were published originally in a little-known review, *Matines*. They are decidedly unpleasant to read. The author indulges in rather coarse

pleasantries, vulgar remarks, hollow witticisms such as one would hardly expect from a man of good taste. His method is very simple: he starts from some real but minor defects of Claudé and swells and exaggerates them, thus tending to create the impression that they characterize perfectly Claudé's entire literary creation. He relies also on another equally despicable form of attack which consists in offering first a particular interpretation as hypothetical, and then, when the sensibility and common sense of the reader has been somewhat blunted, in presenting the hypothesis as proved. From that "proof," the critic proceeds to the most strange and outrageous deductions.

Ducaud-Bourget criticizes Claudé on three scores. First, his so-called plagiarism of the Bible: to prove his point the critic quotes several literal transcriptions of the Scriptures which appear in Claudé's works without references. He infers then that Claudé has tried to deceive his readers by giving biblical passages as his own, and that his entire utilization of the Bible is of the same kind. The first accusation is too ridiculous to warrant any denial. We might say only that Ducaud-Bourget considers Claudé and his readers as inordinately stupid to suspect the one to have tended, the others to have fallen into such a trap. As for the second point, Klara Maurer and Father Rywalski have devoted thorough and enlightened studies to the biblical symbolism of Claudé (*Die biblische Symbolik im Werke Claudés* and *Claudé et la Bible*). They have shown that biblical themes are constantly interwoven in Claudé's works and that literal transcriptions, not always felicitous from a literary point of view, are few and unimportant. The second denunciation of Claudé, more serious, deals with his orthodoxy. Here Ducaud-Bourget's argumentation twists the meaning of several declarations that Claudé puts into the mouths of his characters, or generalizes a specific statement valid only in a determined circumstance, or gives

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a strict theological sense to a casual reflection. With this method, it would be easy to make heretics out of Saint John of the Cross or of Saint Teresa. Thus Ducaud-Bourget waxes indignant because, in *Le père humilié*, the pope says to his nephew, "Marriage is not sensual delectation." Claudel is accused of teaching angelism since he does not recognize one of the natural ends of marriage. In point of fact, the pope realizes that his nephew is attracted by a purely sensual desire to the girl he wants to marry, and he cautions him quite properly that this is not a safe foundation for the sacrament of marriage. Elsewhere Claudel says: "Christ is in the Holy Eucharist. But he continues to live in Rome in flesh and bone. It is St. Peter and his 250 successors up to Pius XII." Ducaud-Bourget comments wittily: "Therefore the pious anthropagist who would eat a pontifical chop would also receive Holy Communion." Thirdly, Claudel is accused of preaching immorality because Violaine, who is engaged to Jacques, kisses the leper. She willingly renounces marriage which is, according to the critic's pronouncement, her real vocation. By so doing, she is unjust to her intended husband, to the children who would be born from that union (sic). By that sort of criticism, Claudel emerges as an author guilty of albigensianism, angelism, protestantism and free-masonry, deserving of denunciation to the Holy Office (which Ducaud-Bourget magnanimously declines to do). Another article attacks Mauriac and the defenders of Claudel with the same absurd charges and an occasional distortion of established facts mingled with insinuations about their private lives.

Mr. North, in his *Le Catholicisme dans l'œuvre de François Mauriac*, so to speak, answered in advance, and with an incomparable authority, the specious arguments of Ducaud-Bourget and Co. This work is preceded by a substantial preface by Gaétan Bernoville which reviews the entire problem of the Catholic novelist with

special reference to Mauriac. That study should be mandatory reading for all the members of the Catholic Renaissance Society since it deals with the major topic constantly recurring in the discussions of the group, that is, the relationship between art and morality. Mr. Bernoville also has taken cognizance of Ducaud-Bourget's vilification of the Catholic writers who must not be considered as theologians or as moralists but essentially as artists with great freedom of expression, who must not be made responsible either for all the declarations of their characters until it is ascertained that they express their own views. One might not accept in its entirety the position taken by Mr. Bernoville in this debate which remains nevertheless illuminating and fruitful. For my part, I am not prepared to restrict the Catholic writer to a purely negative role, that is "not to trouble the soul, not to induce us into temptation." The difficulties involved in defining clearly the duties of the Catholic writer and the precise relationship between art and morality have exercised the sagacity of Charles Du Bos and of Mauriac himself. Even when one agrees on the principle, the practical applications are still baffling. Mauriac has been acutely conscious at least of the negative duties imposed upon him by his faith, yet he has never been sure to have remained faithful to his ideal. He has been particularly sensitive to the accusations of Catholic critics, and he has revised his technique several times to meet their objections. In the first novels, he presented his characters struggling against temptation. Later, however, he has attempted to demonstrate the disorder and the restlessness of lives which have rejected God.

Mr. North begins his study with a detailed biographical research on Mauriac taken from autobiographical sources, including the autobiographical novels, and other documents. Although these chapters do not bring out anything of importance not heretofore known, they establish more clearly the relationship between Mauriac's

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own experiences and the novels he has drawn from them. The analysis of the novels and dramatic works is solid and subtle. The delineation of Mauriac's method with its successive modifications is well documented and enlightening. Finally, there is no more thorough presentation yet of Mauriac's themes, love, sin and divine grace, the indirect apology of Christianity and the multiform application of these themes through the Christian characters and the sinners. Mr. North, who evidently loves Mauriac, is not blind to his weaknesses, his incapacity for painting saints, or even simple, honest Christians, his ignorance of the virtue of hope which had been the guiding light in Péguy's life. Mr. North has superbly assessed Mauriac's originality and the reasons why his place is assured in posterity among the most notable writers of this generation.

—FERNAND VIAL

Fordham University

Journal, Tome IV, 1928. By Charles Du Bos. Paris: Corrêa.

In this fourth volume of Charles Du Bos' *Journal* he expressed the desire to be a Christian Proust. To a great extent he has succeeded, for this book is full of reminiscences and is replete with psychological reactions to minute details. The volume reveals as well a virile Catholic, following the inspirations of the Holy Spirit and striving to act as a leaven in the literary world in which he moved.

Besides the general picture that Charles Du Bos gives of the daily life of a French critic this volume contains, I believe, three salient points of interest for an American Catholic reader: the genesis of certain of the author's works, the spiritual autobiography of one who had recently returned to the Church, and the difficulties between André Gide and Charles Du Bos because of the latter's *Le Dialogue avec André Gide*.

What does this volume reveal about the life of a French critic in 1928? What does

it offer of general interest? As we read we find Du Bos clarifying his opinions on literature, art or music through discussions with his wife or friends. We get glimpses of little intimate reunions with important persons at that time: André Gide, John and Joseph Baruzi, Peter Wust, Jacques Maritain and others. The incident of Du Bos and Peter Wust's arriving unannounced for Mass one morning at the Maritain home is delightful. Then, too, there are beautiful tributes to Maritain's gentleness and charity. It is interesting to note Du Bos' attitude towards *snobisme* and its application to art. He feels that a person who has been reared in a worldly atmosphere has the advantage of seeing the emptiness of all that and is consequently on his guard against fads in literature or art. A psychologist will find here many an arresting passage of keen analysis of self or others. And there are charming passages in which we walk with Du Bos through the streets of Paris, seeing things as he did.

As a critic Du Bos was greatly interested in the problem of inspiration. How he wished that poets might tell him the how and the why of their works! He makes his critics' task much less difficult, for the careful reader can easily follow the genesis of certain articles or longer works. This is particularly true of his essay on the artist Odette des Garets and of the two books *Le Dialogue avec André Gide* and *Byron et le besoin de la fatalité*. For the article on Odette, Du Bos talks to the artist herself, consults his notes and then takes another trip to an art gallery to be sure of having a fresh impression. Many points are given concerning the Byron work. Later in this review we shall speak of the work on Gide.

In this fourth volume of his *Journal*, Charles Du Bos, who had just returned to the Church in July, 1927, has, at times, recourse to one of his favorite quotations from Patmore's *Aurea Dicta*: "To him that waits all things reveal themselves, provided that he has the courage not to deny in the

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darkness what he has seen in the light." In justice to Du Bos we should remember that this feeling of depression was partly due to ill health. He experienced temptations against faith, but a conference with l'abbé Altermann and a devout reception of the sacrament of penance usually cleared such difficulties. One of the most interesting passages in this volume is a minute analysis of the workings of actual grace during a prolonged temptation. A great problem for him was the difficulty of "coming back to life," of facing the cares of the day after the spiritual joys of his morning Mass. One of the August entries contains a beautiful prayer in which he asks for the grace to bridge the gap between his Mass and his daily tasks. Du Bos' extraordinary natural generosity and sense of honor have their replica in his spiritual life: like the Curé d'Ars he does not want to think of rewards but rather wants to work for God's glory; he is content to do his duty and to trust to God for all the rest. Over and over again one finds him commenting on the unity of the faithful at morning Mass and in daily Communion. Here, too, we find his appreciation of the so-called "little man:" Du Bos notes that a server at the six o'clock Mass at Notre-Dame was a man destitute in appearance but of the distinguished type which is characteristic of a French artisan. We find Du Bos suffering at times the loss of a friendship or being the victim of cutting remarks simply because he is willing to live his faith. A sentence such as *Ce n'est pas pour rire que l'on croit* shows how much he suffered. Most of these difficulties are intimately linked with the publication of *Le Dialogue avec André Gide*, and so we shall now consider that problem.

Because of the rather recent death of André Gide, his works are being discussed more than usual. In order to avoid any misunderstanding it seems necessary to indicate briefly here the cause of difficulty between these two French authors. Nothing less than pederasty could make Charles Du

Bos come out in the open against his friend. Du Bos knew that this action would be attributed to his recent return to the Church, whereas actually as early as 1922 a *Diary* entry registers his disgust in that regard. The publication of *Corydon* and of certain passages of *Si le Grain ne meurt* coupled with the fact that no *critique de classe* raised his voice against Gide compelled him to do so. He had Gide's own word for it that he had written *Si le Grain ne meurt* precisely to speak of his sin.

For Du Bos the keystone to Gide's problem is the devil and the reversal of values, because in certain of Gide's works evil is called good and good, evil. It is Gide, we are told, who is the real *faux monnayeur*. And this is all the more tragic because Gide is a *spirituel-né*: sometimes he would have us think that he believes in the devil, and at other times that he does not. This latter attitude, Du Bos tells us, is due to his reverence for rationalism and science—a reverence shared by many other so-called intellectuals. And so we feel while reading these pages that much more is at stake than a personal difference between two friends. We see men like l'abbé Altermann, Maritain and Du Bos trying to permeate their milieu with a Christian leaven. The fact that Charles Du Bos submitted most of the manuscript to Gide long before publication gives adequate proof of his honor. And his charity is shown by his asking l'abbé Altermann and Maritain to read the manuscript to see whether or not he had offended against the greatest virtue. Both Maritain and Du Bos admitted that the chapter *Le Labyrinthe à claire-voie* was cruelly true, but they felt that justice and charity towards those who might be led astray by Gide required the publication of *Le Dialogue avec André Gide*. Charles Du Bos was not afraid to discuss the book with Gide; after one such interview he wrote that only God would ever be able to save Gide from himself.

This volume of the *Journal* registers others' reactions to the book as well.

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Maritain, for instance, understood perfectly why Gide would not be able to stand the blow, because he told Du Bos: "... when your work has been read, nothing will be left of the clever scaffolding by means of which ... he has shown and saved both his face and his very person."

The publication of this book was one of vital importance for Du Bos as an author. Because of the many difficulties, he decided in June not to publish it. A July entry shows us how much the decision cost him, for he felt as though he had signed a contract never again to express the real depths of his thoughts. Those who are interested in his work may indeed be grateful that he changed his mind.

To appreciate fully all the aspects of this problem one should read *Le Dialogue avec André Gide, Lettres de Charles Du Bos et réponses de André Gide*, both published by Corrêa, and the references to Du Bos in Gide's *Journal* (1889-1939). A passage from the latter will prove to what an extent Du Bos' action was attributed to his conversion: "Mme. Theo's statement about Charles Du Bos is excellent ... *Il fait son salut sur votre dos.*"

The reader who is unacquainted with Du Bos as a person or as a writer must realize that the *Journal* was an intimate instrument for its author, that the entries were dictated, for the most part, and that they were usually not submitted to literary polishing. Hence he will frequently find long and involved sentences. He must also be prepared to find initials or baptismal names for identifications: Z or ZI denotes Mme. Du Bos; ZII, the Du Bos daughter Primrose; Isabelle, Jacques Rivière's wife, and so on. But there is an excellent index. Some readers will dislike the pages which deal with Du Bos' health, but these very details show against what odds the author was working. Anyone interested in contemporary French literature will surely find this volume well worth reading.

—SISTER MARIE MAGDALEN, O.P.

Rosary College

Ich und Gnade. Eine Studie über Friedrich Schlegels Bekehrung. By Karl August Horst. Freiburg: Herder Verlag.

This succinct study represents the most recent attempt to analyze the problem of Friedrich Schlegel's conversion. Up to now, the journey to Rome of this prominent leader of early German romanticism has been variously explained: as a definite break in his normal intellectual development, as the unfortunate result of his *heillose Naturanlage*, his highly complex individuality, even as an irreparable error of judgment.

Dr. Horst does not share these views. He maintains the thesis that Schlegel's religious development, while difficult to trace, was due principally to two factors: his natural tendency toward conversion and the special influence of divine grace.

The introductory chapter acquaints us briefly with the "wandering problem" that was Schlegel: his character, home background, and early literary activity. A few pages are devoted to a critical evaluation of pertinent studies in the field, notably those by Karl Enders and Franziska Imle. The main discussion is presented under five headings: (I) Schlegel and the Philosophy of Idealism; (II) the Road to Universalism; (III) Nature and Spirit; (IV) Schlegel and Literature; (V) The Road to Conversion. The last chapter contains concluding observations.

As the title of the book indicates, the author is mainly concerned with an analysis of the trends and processes of thought which dominated Schlegel's religious development during the decade immediately preceding his conversion. In consequence, he has to cover the whole range of Schlegel's intellectual activity: his attitude towards the philosophical currents of the times, his ideas on the purpose and study of history, education, and science, and, finally, his reflection on the mission of art and literature. From this many-sided activity, Schlegel gained, if not conversion itself, at least something vital to

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his fundamentally religious nature: a clarification of his own religious aspirations and, with it, a definite orientation toward the Church. Schlegel emerges here a true romanticist, a thinker in search of a new synthesis that would bridge the gulf between the real and the ideal, between the finite and the infinite, between man and God. That Friedrich Schlegel, unlike his equally famous brother, did find that synthesis in the Catholic concept of the divine mediatorship of the Word-made-Flesh, was due, Dr. Horst contends, solely and entirely to the operation of divine grace. The meaning of the term "grace," as used here, has a modern ring to it. The author describes it as "an immediate experience of the reality of God," an influence from above which suddenly and forcefully broke in upon Schlegel's consciousness, thus opening to him the door to a new life in the Church.

Specialists in the field of German Romanticism will welcome Dr. Horst's contribution as a valuable complement to earlier studies on the subject. It may be doubted, however, whether it will have appeal to anyone else. It presupposes, on the part of the reader, more than passing familiarity with the personalities, literature, and philosophies of the Romantic period. The author writes a polished and thoroughly modern German. Unfortunately, he has given us no bibliography.

—REV. HENRY C. SORG, S.D.S.

Un Mauvais Rêve. By Georges Bernanos. Paris: Plon.

Tradition of Freedom. By Georges Bernanos. Roy Publishers. \$3.00.

Un Mauvais Rêve is a posthumous novel, the inception of which dates back to 1931. Bernanos then conceived the characters of Ganse, an aging and failing writer; of Simone Alfieri, his strange friend, one of those intelligent and despairing women who perhaps was not blessed by divine grace; of Olivier Mainville and Ganse's nephew, Philippe, two tormented youths.

Four years later, he incorporated the chapters written around these characters into a mystery novel. Simone became the murderess of *Un Crime*. However, the pages written in 1931 were not included in the final version of the novel. But Bernanos was soon working again on the abandoned chapters. Going deeper and deeper into his story, he wrote in a few weeks, at Majorca, this *Mauvais Rêve*, soon thrown into a drawer, from which it was to be brought out three years after the author's death.

The theme: the despair and fear which torment the characters; the lie taking possession of a soul, the dark dream, the *mauvais rêve* which the heroine bears within herself and from which only murder will free her. "Of all the means that she had countenanced for her deliverance, crime was the last within her grasp, within the compass of her impotent revolt. The victim was of small account. The motive even less. It was enough that it should flatter her pride; she would not have killed in order to steal. Even in blood, larceny remained larceny. But a murder, premeditated and brought to fruition, coldly executed and born without remorse, completes the value of a total and definitive break with the society of men, her special hatred."

The work is uneven, but, despite its weaknesses, displays great depth and is throughout thought-provoking. It by no means suffers from comparison with these other "combats dans la nuit, à tâtons, où l'ennemi est partout et nulle part," *Sous le Soleil de Satan* and *Le Journal d'un Curé de Campagne*.

Under the title, *Tradition of Freedom*, an American publisher has recently released a translation of *La France contre les Robots*. It is not "the last book written by a great patriot and a great Christian," as the jacket indicates. Three posthumous works have come out after its publication in France: *Les Enfants Humiliés* (Gallimard, 1949), *Dialogue des Carmélites* (Editions du Seuil, 1950), and *Un Mauvais*

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Rêve (Plon, 1951). This book, however, may be Bernanos' last *pamphlet*. His attacks are directed against dictatorship as well as against democracy. "The vile despotism of the Majority is a slow infection that does not breed fever. The Majority creates a civilization in its own image, a society composed of beings who are not equal but similar, recognizable only by their fingerprints. It is insane to confide Liberty to the care of the Majority . . . The Dictator is not a leader. He is an emanation, a creation of the Masses; he is the incarnation of the Masses, he is the Masses at their highest potential of evil."

Bernanos is essentially preoccupied with man and man's responsibility. Without a sense of responsibility, liberty is but an illusion: freedom does not really exist.

The French civilization, heir of the Greek civilization, has labored during many a century to create free men, men responsible for their actions: it will not enter "the paradise of the robots."

—PIERRE E. BRODIN

Lycée Français de New-York

Celle qui pleure. By Léon Bloy. Paris: Mercure de France.

Léon Bloy (Ses Débuts littéraires du *Chat Noir* au *Mendiant Ingrat*, 1882-1892).

By Joseph Bollery. Paris: Albin Michel.

Léon Bloy, the Pauper Prophet. By Emmanuela Polimeni. Philosophical Library. \$2.75.

Portrait of Léon Bloy. By E. T. Dubois. Sheed & Ward. \$2.00.

It was inevitable that the fulgurant élan of Léon Bloy would one day combine with his private dedication to Mary as "the Knight of Our Lady of Sorrows" to produce a book entirely devoted to her. Geography, chronology and personal preference determined that this book would be about Our Lady of La Salette. Bloy first dreamed of such a work in 1879 after his first pilgrimage to the Mount of La Salette. Years later, through the encouragement of his friend, Pierre Termier, he again began

work, and in 1908 *Celle qui pleure* was published. In mid-century, thirty-four years after the death of Léon Bloy, this recent edition is of particular interest in view of its subject, Our Lady's plea for penance to avert God's impending punishments, and because the ideas of Bloy are now taking on their full significance, as for example his idea of lay co-workers with religious missionaries.

The small circle of loyal friends which he had during his lifetime has greatly widened. Serious men who are concerned about the spiritual erosion among God's poor and about the spiritual callousness of the rich bourgeois find in the works of Bloy and almost surprising timeliness and an astonishing urgency. In addition to those interested in the vitality of the Faith, Bloy's works appeal to certain moderns who are open to the supernatural through their inquietude and through an undefined longing for self-dedication. How near in spirit to Gabriel Marcel are these words of Bloy on the opening page: "One now needs Apostles and not lecturers, Witnesses and not demonstrators." The continuation is completely Bloy: "It is no longer the time to prove that God exists. The hour is striking to give one's life for Jesus Christ." These words explain at once the bewilderment of the logicians and the attraction of Pascalian Christ-seekers. They also indicate the plan of the book. *Celle qui pleure* does not purport to prove anything about Mary's appearance to little Mélanie and Maximin, nor even to relate the facts. (These facts are found in the second Appendix, related by "an excellent priest" with the imprimatur of the Bishop of Lecce.) Rather is it a witness to what Bloy calls the second and more unbelievable Miracle of La Salette; that is, the universal indifference on the one hand and on the other the actual hostility shown by a great number to the Mother of Christ in tears. "The enormity of the case would require an archangel's power of vision," he writes. Small wonder that for almost thirty years the magnifi-

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cence of Mary as heavenly ambassador and the message filled with dark prophecies stirred this apostle and witness to Christ through Our Lady.

Throughout the book Bloy juxtaposes secular history with the Apparition. His mordant irony paints the mundane in all its spiritual bluntness; his devotion to Mary sings eloquent dithyrambs to carry her message to the people. The indifference of Christians to Mary's request for penance confirms him in his hatred of the mediocre: "Today is the reign of the demon in the form of tepidity, the era of the Christian without faith, an affable sort."

Whole-souled dedication to the vision which Mary's words opened before him brings him, in chapter eight, to propound his theory that the reign of Mary means, substantially, the reign of God the Father. He spans the centuries to link La Salette to Calvary as he considers the words of Mary to be the most sorrowful plaint since the *Consummation*. The book continues with chapters devoted to the persecution of Mélanie by statesmen and prelates, the prophetic gifts of both Mélanie and Maximin, and the refusal of the missionaries of La Salette to accept the rule which Mélanie had received from Our Lady for the *Apôtres des Derniers Temps*. This last furnishes matter for a good deal of invective.

The critic of a work by Bloy is in much the same situation as the hound with a dozen hares to chase. Beyond mentioning Bloy's supporting reference to the "revelations" of Maria of Agreda which were later condemned, this review will not discuss the authenticity of the events surrounding the apparition, the message of Our Lady, the secrets of Mélanie and Maximin. Nor will the question of Bloy's own personality and spiritual life be explored. To come to an evaluation of the work and not the man, the first thing to be pointed out is that, in spite of apparently disparate items in successive chapters, Bloy's preoccupation with the need for generous

souls of true faith to cut through the cocoon of materialism and sham piety is an informing principle of the entire work. His gift of lyricism and his penetration of symbols burgeon in passages which by all meanings ought not to be read running.

These gifts of artistry fitted him, for example, to accept with the greatest ease the description of Mary by Mélanie and Maximin. If they described her as "clothed in fire," Bloy could applaud: "Would Bos-suet or St. Augustine have said it better?" He could also understand the children's reticence and silence, for "gold, diamonds, the most precious stones, even the sun, appeared as mud to these two children" in comparison to their vision of Mary. He leaves the spiritual significance to the perceptive reader.

The two chapters "Le Torrent Sublime" and "En Paradis" are the most lyrical, at times brilliantly so, in their exposition of the symbolical meaning of the Mount of La Salette. Bloy easily makes the transition from the cataract in the abyss to the picture of a veritable tempest of saints rushing towards God, "an assumption of cataracts of love." The chapter on the woman of the New Testament who had been crippled eighteen years as a figure of La Salette is a good example of Bloy's interest in searching the symbolism of the Scriptures.

Celle qui pleure is not the most important of the works of Bloy, but the reader will find, to his dislike or to his delight, all the characteristics of Bloy. Here are the fierce convictions, the irony and hyperbole, the total dedication to Mary and to the Trinity, the apocalyptic vision. Here is a book, published at the beginning of the century, which, in some respects, is prophetic of the interests of the middle years of the century.

Joseph Bollery illuminates all the facets of this astonishing person and the vicissitudes of his early writing career in his biography of Bloy. Skill, perspicacity, and love have guided M. Bollery in this presentation of his friend through selected

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correspondence with annotations which deftly make the *mise au point* for the constant crises attendant on one who "spoke in the name of the Absolute in a world of the Relative." These are the years which witnessed Bloy's association with those mad, eclectic, witty iconoclasts of *Le Chat Noir*, his heartbreakingly ignored *Le Révéléateur du Globe*, his brief acceptance among the highbrows of *Le Figaro* who finally could not tolerate his unsupportable mania for telling the truth, his friendship with Maurice Rollinat, Louis Montchal, Villiers de l'Isle-Adam, Huysmans, and with the Superior General at La Grande Chartreuse, his liaison with Berthe Dumont, model for Clotilde Marchal of *La Femme pauvre*, his brief career as editor and writer for his own "little magazine," *Le Pal*. The background for all this was, as has often been described, the very real poverty which made even existence precarious. The famous figure of Caïn Marchenoir issued from it all, however, in the autobiographical *Le Désespéré*. In spite of a hostile literary coterie and pusillanimous publishers, one man, Soirat, enthusiastic over *Le Pal*, became for the first and last time a publisher. His was the distinction of possessing "une sympathie joyeuse et bon enfant pour tout ce qui attaque, sape, proteste, vocifère" and hence of the stature equal to publishing *Le Désespéré*. This period also includes his engagement and marriage to Johanne Molbech, the deaths of Barbey d'Aureville and Villiers, the rupture with Huysmans, and the beginning of the friendship with Henry de Groux.

Simply to list these events, however, gives no notion of the genuine value of this biography. In this array of correspondence, reprinted articles and critical comment one finally gets a total picture of this writer whose works and whose life are a puzzle to many. There is no longer any need to rely on how this or that critic feels about Bloy. The verb is used intentionally; there has been a great deal of

feeling, mistakenly termed thinking, on the subject. The interplay between Bloy and his friends and enemies reveals that the adverse characteristics for which he is so easily blamed were in reality mitigated. For example, his intransigence was counterbalanced by delicate tact (see the letter, pages 112, 113, in reply to the self-designated atheist, Montchal, which ought to be read by all who have been exposed to the idea of Bloy's intolerance); his seeming pride by humility and even self-effacement (see page 53, where Bollery points out Bloy's absolute silence in his writings about the renunciation of his inheritance in favor of his brother Henri at a time when such a gesture was practically heroic). His moroseness must be seen as the other extreme of actual gaiety (George Aurioi and René Martineau are quoted as witnesses to this in their writings; many examples in the writings of Bloy can be found). Most importantly, there are letters and personal details added by Bollery which throw considerable light upon Bloy's so-called querulousness and pettiness in friendship. From these letters his loyalty and devotion to Barbey d'Aureville and to the dying Verlaine appear no less than beautiful; his tolerance of Villiers d'Isle-Adam's flightiness, remarkable; and his break with Huysmans understandable. M. Bollery has the last word, "Léon Bloy était le plus désarmé des hommes devant le moindre témoignage de sympathie et il se livrait avec la plus naïve confiance quitte à réagir violemment quand il constatait qu'il n'avait été qu'un objet de curiosité."

Those who are interested in unlocking a *roman à clef* will find identifications which are not so well-known. ("Léopold" is Camille Redondin; not, as E. T. Dubois believes, Bloy himself.) The postface is valuable for the inclusion of a heretofore unpublished letter of Bloy to Henry de Groux. In addition to all this wealth of material are the very fine photographs and portraits of Bloy's associates. Of particular interest is the portrait by Uzès of "Dom

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Léon Bloy" which is "d'inspiration assez chatnoiresque." Not the least delightful aspect of this rewarding book is the verve with which these letters abound. Another volume to cover the last twenty-five years, 1892-1917, is eagerly awaited.

In English, the current biographies are *Léon Bloy, the Pauper Prophet*, by Emanuela Polimeni and *Portrait of Léon Bloy*, by Elfriede T. Dubois. *The Pauper Prophet* is particularly valuable because in this work are combined perspicacity and empathy. Miss Polimeni appreciates the vigor of Bloy's flaming invective occasioned by "the supineness, self-complacency, tepidity, and worldliness of the 'good,'" as he called for a "passionate and not merely a decorous piety." Nevertheless she can evaluate justly the danger of speaking in the name of the "Absolute"—"Truly a perilous vocation and fraught with moral danger for one whose 'supernatural' indignation was closely allied to a most 'natural' temperamental weakness," for "impatience when directed towards individuals is rarely guiltless." Her judgments are the results of careful checking of defects against merits; she does not advocate any uncritical cult for this "volcanically supernatural Catholic."

Sanity and wholeness thus characterize this study which places Bloy so accurately in his century. Critical judgments are based on actual quotations from nearly all of his works. Comments on the break with Huysmans are understanding; treatment of the much-debated question of Bloy's arrogance is guided by wide reading of Bloy's letters and diaries which reveal passages of deep humility, insistence on the primacy of the spiritual, the final necessity of abandonment to God's will and absolute loyalty to Christ's Church.

A particularly important contribution is Miss Polimeni's *rapprochement* of Bloy's spiritual situation with that of the Russian Orthodox, alike in their cosmic consciousness and their hopes of the world's salvation through the transforming power of the

Spirit. The chapter "Bloy and Israel" is a masterly condensation of the various writings of Bloy on this subject. Here again Miss Polimeni shows a thorough knowledge of his writings, a judicious weighing of facts, and a warm understanding. If on the one hand she notes a lack of reasoning power and sense of proportion, she also recognizes his spiritual sensitiveness and magnificent energy. The book is worthwhile as a resumé for those who have read Bloy's works and as an introduction for those who have not. For those engaged in teaching, it can be inspirational to read of this man Bloy who was preserved from the temptation to "partial living" and who maintained that "for want of robust instruction, souls become anaemic and sickly, incapable of throwing off the effects of poison in their environment and of assimilating what is good and beautiful."

The second biography is by Elfriede T. Dubois, entitled *Portrait of Léon Bloy*. It is tidy. It is dangerous. It is dangerous to believe that one can dispassionately dispose of an "entrepreneur des Démolitions" with clean cut categories. It is dangerous to give the impression that all the phases of such a life and its works are thus adequately covered.

The reader ought to check this biography against that of M. Bollery and against Bloy's own writings. A larger view of the *Affaire Huysmans*, for one thing, would result. Most controversial are the opinions expressed in the chapters "Literary Significance of Léon Bloy" and "The Value of Bloy's Works." In the first of these, the author compares Bloy's conception of suffering to that of Musset. But Bloy is far and away more profound than the romantic Musset. Nor can Bloy's notions be explained simply by vague reference to his appreciation of the doctrine of the Mystical Body. The single letter to Georges Landry found in Albert Béguin's *Léon Bloy: Study in Impatience* would show far more of the real direction of his ideas on suffering.

In estimating the value of Bloy's works,

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Mrs. Dubois reproaches him for the structure of his novels. Again, she speaks of his "inability to shape the greatness of his vision into form." The point at issue becomes clear: there is a very great need for precisely the type of study which will concentrate on the literary, artistic form which his vision did, after all, assume. Both English works make this need clear, for the Polimeni book was admittedly written to hasten Bloy's "free entry into the world of souls." The title of the book by Dubois, "portrait," suggests a means to arrive at this more objective appraisal. A *rapprochement* of the literary works with the paintings of Georges Rouault could be a definite help in formulating this objective appraisal in the world of letters. Deeper appreciation of the artistic form of his works would also reveal an inherent harmony between this form and his own greatness of vision.

—SISTER FRANCIS ELLEN RIORDAN, C.S.J.

The Lusíads. By Luiz de Camões. Trans. by Leonard Bacon. The Hispanic Society of America. \$4.50.

Leonard Bacon, recent Pulitzer Prize winner, has produced what this reviewer deems the most praiseworthy English version of that great Portuguese epic, *The Lusíads*. That he is a poet and scholar of worth may be seen in his translation, with its smooth flow of meter and rhyme in the same octave formation adopted by Camões from the Italian poets of the Renaissance; Mr. Bacon offers us a masterly interpretation of the word and spirit of the original. His triumph in this regard does not surprise those who have followed his career as a conscientious translator of *The Song of Roland* and *The Poem of the Cid*.

Mr. Bacon has placed his notes conveniently at the end of each canto. He says in his introduction that his notes "would not exist at all, if there had not been many profound scholars before the compiler." He has sifted well all the commentaries of his predecessors and, doing so, has remedied many defects; he has added with

good effect to the interpretations and identifications necessary in a poem concerned so largely with the geographical, national, and racial aspects of India and the numerous other regions through which Vasco da Gama passed on his way there and back.

Portugal has played an enormously important role in history. It is meet that those of us who know only the limited part she plays now should become acquainted with her exploration, conquest, and colonization from the end of the fifteenth century. Camões' account of the journey of Vasco da Gama was in part activated by his own experiences in traveling to India and returning to a saddened homeland.

Leonard Bacon was captivated by the mournful cadence and the beauty of Camões' lovely lyric, *By the Rivers of Babylon*, which is included in this book. True poet that the translator is, he has successfully transmitted the lyric's strains to English meter and a rhyme modeled on the *redondilhas* of the Portuguese. Every aspect of this book will bring its readers closer to the realization that Portugal stands with Italy, France and Spain in epic and lyric achievement.

This reviewer, as did Mr. Bacon, thanks Archer Milton Huntington for the welcome which he gave to this translation, adding it to the fine array of documents published by the Hispanic Society of America.

—J. D. M. FORD

Harvard University

Petit-jour. By Marie Noël. Paris: Librairie Stock.

This book is a rosary of joyful, sorrowful and glorious reminiscences by Marie Noël of her earliest childhood. In prose and refreshing artlessness, the beloved poetess of *Les Chansons et les Heures*, *Les Chants de la Merci*, *Rosaire des Joies*, *Chants Sauvages*, and *Chants et Psaumes d'automne*, relates with childlike abandonment the awakening in her sixty-eighth year to the consciousness of her first loves.

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Joy there is indeed in the child's heart at the awareness of the warmth and the security of the family home, in the singing of songs her parents taught her, in the gatherings of neighborhood friends, in the outings into the country and the "faraway" vacation trips to not-too-distant Usy in Vezelay. Through the happiness of those dawning years there appear the remembrances of those heartrending sorrows ever attendant upon little children: utter loneliness at the mother's absence, irreparable loss of a puppy, feeling of being forsaken at the coming of a little brother.

But at the very core of all these recollections stand the glorious memories: the Cathedral of Auxerre across the street, the feast days of the Church, the nuns from a nearby convent, the parish. All these souvenirs have stamped on her mind in indelible print the primacy of *Jesús qui l'aime*.

The rosary ends on the mystery of acquiring the knowledge of right and wrong—an awe-inspiring Amen. Marie Noël, intensely human and intensely religious, has the genius to express felicitously the common reactions and impressions of childhood. Her *Petit-jour* should find its way into many homes because of its universal appeal.

—LEO MAYNARD BELLEROSE
Georgetown University

Les hommes contre l'humain. By Gabriel Marcel. Paris: La Colombe.

Rome n'est plus dans Rome. By Gabriel Marcel. Printed in *Les oeuvres libres*, August, 1951.

Now that the principal philosophical works of Marcel are available in English, he is being generally recognized by American scholars as one of the most stimulating thinkers of the century. The appearance of a book of his can be heralded as an intellectual event. The past year has seen the publication in France of a new volume of his essays and a new play.

In *Les hommes contre l'humain* Marcel

engages in a critical examination of some of the significant moral postulates of our age. He visualizes a mankind warring against its own humanity, subjecting itself to the debasing influences of conditioned mass thinking, of technological pressures and of propaganda techniques. The maze of impersonal forces which man has created have entrapped his spirit. He is lost in the more immediate (and more productive) reality of the puppetry of impersonality. Man has become one of his own machines, and not even one of the more efficient variety.

Through all of this one can hear the neo-Socratic Marcel of *Journal métaphysique* and of *Etre et Avoir*. The suspicion of technical progress is still present ("Radio is an usurpation of the divine ubiquity"). The centralized state remains the official agent of the debasement of personality ("State control of science and of technics is beyond a doubt one of the worst calamities of our time"). Hope for man consists not in specific social or political reform but in "a restoration of values: we must learn afresh the distinction between the true and the false, the good and the evil, the just and the unjust." Man must free himself in order to find himself, and, paradoxically enough, to become free he must rediscover the bonds of creatureship. Until he learns the truth of his dependence upon God he will not learn the truth of his freedom from dependence on the world of *avoir*, the impersonal creatures which people the universe.

Marcel insists upon the importance of the *prochain*, the reality within the reach of direct observation. It is this and not abstracted reality which constitutes the true orbit of the philosopher. Moral decisions should stem from an area which is real and meaningful to the individual. This is the dominant theme of Marcel's theatre. His latest play, *Rome n'est plus dans Rome*, continues to examine the basis of the moral decision. The play is set in

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the near future with a Russian invasion of France an immediate danger. Pascal Laumière, a literary man of enlightened Liberal views, is prepared to face the worst. His wife Renée, without consulting him, arranges for his acceptance of the chair of French literature at a new university in Brazil. Pascal almost drifts into acquiescence, consoling himself that, as with Corneille's Sertorius, "Rome n'est plus dans Rome, elle est toute où je suis." He can carry France with him; he goes to Brazil.

Pascal soon learns that to confuse the idea with the real object is to live a lie. Death comes to him as, a broken man, he is broadcasting a message to the French, beseeching them not to desert their country in the face of the advancing enemy. For the first time in Marcel's theater, the basis of the essential moral situation is not isolated for us. The situation here is made extremely complex, perhaps too much so for theatrical effectiveness. The crisis for Pascal is not only political, but domestic and religious as well. The family relationships are superbly drawn with a few subtly allusive strokes. In a sense the marriage situation has been the core problem of Marcel's dramatic work. The current play will stand as one of the sharpest statements of the problem. But Pascal undergoes a mysterious religious crisis as well. His experiences with two priests provide the symbolism. One priest represents restrictive institutionalism (the religious counterpart of Communism and loveless marriage). The other represents the warmth of the love of God (with related symbols in the soil of France and the self-sacrificing love of woman). It is in reaction against the first priest that Pascal's decision is made. It is the second priest who rushes to the dying Pascal at the end of the play.

Actually the play is concerned with the same theme interpreted at three different levels: political, domestic, religious. At

each level the road to freedom lies through self-knowledge and, in the highest sense, self-control. Until a man faces reality, *willingly* confronts the situation which is confronting him, he can have no rational control over his own destiny. But if the confrontation is wisdom it is also love: a woman's arms, the soil of my native land, and the nearness of God.

The concrete objects which Pascal comes to see as good are the proper objects of Marcel's existential observation. The existentialist thinkers are not philosophers at all in the traditional sense of the word. They are men giving witness, to their own existence, their own experiences, their own sense of contact with reality. The experiencing agent does not create reality, but he does have a large share in creating the drama consequent on his own existence. The course of this drama is in turn dependent on the measure of his awareness of reality. The problem of the extent to which reality as known corresponds to reality in itself cannot be solved on epistemological grounds alone. Here existentialism finds much of its value. The existentialist, beginning with an awareness of his own existence, proceeds to give testimony to his awareness of reality outside himself, and to the activity of his will in confronting that reality. His rejection of abstractions is the result not of a dislike of universals but of his own integrity based on a loyalty to the facts of his own experience. The value of such testimony will of course be dependent upon the acuteness of his perception and the clarity of his communication. The subjectivity of such testimony is immense, and the danger of self-deception is always present. A systematic philosophy based on existentialist experience would be absurd. All such testimony must be approached with caution, but then, the activities of the human reason are ever beset with dangers. Marcel is the most crystalline and the most cautious of

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existentialist thinkers, and hence his testimony is of especial value to us. For the testimony of Marcel's major works is a testimony to Love.

—ERWIN GEISSMAN

Métamorphose de la littérature, I, De Barrès à Malraux. By Pierre Néraud de Boisdeffre. Preface by André Maurois. Paris: Editions Alsatia.

Pierre Néraud de Boisdeffre has been hailed as a very talented critic and one of the spokesmen of the youngest generation of readers (he was born only in 1926). As we are told by André Maurois in the preface and by Boisdeffre himself in the notice for the second edition, he believes that criticism should be impassioned, subjective, moral, ideological and metaphysical. The art of the writers treated is not neglected, but they are judged on their conception of man and his place in the world. This kind of criticism logically derives from Boisdeffre's idea that literature exists only for the sake of other values that transcend it. Any esthetics which does not suppose a moral engagement or does not lead to a metaphysical perspective is useless for this young critic.

Using a chronological method of exposition, Boisdeffre weaves together biography and works. Frequent, sometimes long quotations interrupt the exposition and slow the reading. But the interest of the reader is held because the quotations are skillfully spaced and the long essays are sprinkled with striking formulas and are cut up into smaller sections with appropriate titles.

"Justice pour Barrès" is an attempt to rehabilitate Barrès without passing over his shortcomings and limitations. Barrès the man was more valuable than his works, of which only enough pages survive to make an admirable anthology illustrating his style, sincerity, and spiritual and moral progress. Starting narrowly with the cult of self, Barrès became dissatisfied, broadened his outlook to include the race and

the nation, and finally came to appreciate the Christian religion as the most precious part of his cultural heritage.

The paradox in "Le 'Christianisme' d'André Gide" is explained by showing that Gide was haunted by Christ and that his life and work illustrate the gradual victory of the pagan over the Christian side of his nature. Having succeeded, not without a foolish kind of courage, in stifling his *inquiétude* and in achieving serenity, Gide lost whatever appeal he had for us. As long as he was "inquiet," Boisdeffre concludes, he was our brother; but Gide the serene pagan does not interest us.

"Saint François Mauriac ou la dernière colonne de l'Eglise" is the most critical essay in the volume, as is evident from the irony of the title and the brutal frankness with which the personality, the ideas and attitudes of Mauriac are criticized. Boisdeffre does not like Mauriac's Catholic faith, because it is based on sensibility; he is even less pleased with Mauriac's pride in considering himself a spokesman of the Church and one of its last pillars. As a novelist, Mauriac is great only in the representation of sordid lives and abominable hearts. Boisdeffre agrees with Sartre in finding that Mauriac's characters are not free agents because Mauriac intervenes in their conscience. Though Mauriac the critic and essayist is a Catholic, Mauriac the novelist has very little to do with Christianity, except perhaps in *Le Baiser au lépreux* and *Le noeud de vipères*. The metaphysics of Mauriac's novels leads to fatalism; his Christianity is bound to Jansenistic, bourgeois and individual morality. But Boisdeffre gladly concedes that Mauriac is a great artist.

"Henry de Montherlant ou le Chevalier du néant" shows how a disciple of Barrès, devoted to the cult of the ego, cannot escape the Christian tradition. His Catholic heritage comes to the surface in his drama and particularly in *Le Maire de Santiago*. Boisdeffre wonders whether this ivory tower writer, for whom the work of art finds

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justification only in itself and to whom humanity has meant very little, will in his maturity rise to spiritual heights, after having exhausted the life of the senses.

"La passion de Georges Bernanos" is the most remarkable illustration of Boisdeffre's idea of the function of literature. He prefers the work of Bernanos the pamphleteer to that of the novelist. In his novels, Bernanos is not interested in average humanity; he deals with extremes, posing in terms of salvation the problem of human destiny and showing the great struggle of the world between Christ and Satan. In his pamphlets the art of the novelist and his evocative power are effectively joined to the passion of the polemic writer. Of all present writers, Bernanos is recommended by Boisdeffre as the most salutary reading for young Frenchmen.

Another apocalyptic prophet and herald of a defeated but struggling France is "André Malraux, le témoin du vingtième siècle." Boisdeffre finds three stages in Malraux' life and work: the revolutionary adventure, a mythology of history and a philosophy of art. Within the first stage there is an evolution towards higher values: the sense of human dignity comes to the fore, the pure men of action and the pure terrorists of the first novels are replaced by intellectuals conscious of the values they want to save. The next stage, a mythology of history, was already in evidence in two of Malraux' earliest works. History becomes the new idol, giving significance to the human adventure. After having turned away from Christ, then from Communism, Malraux appeals to history, its monuments and its myths, seeing in it a kind of Providence, anterior and superior to our individual existences which it alone fulfills and judges. In his last work, *La psychologie de l'art*, of which three volumes have appeared, Malraux arrives at a philosophy of art. Artistic creation is man's effort to survive in this world. Though the artist is subject to history by being bound to a certain meaning of the world deter-

mined by his epoch, his masters and his culture, he escapes it by transcending, transfiguring and recreating it. Art is then a resurrection. Boisdeffre notes that Malraux has thus arrived at a new humanism; but it is a *humanisme désespéré*. It is not sufficient to make man the center of the world; man must be related to the infinite and Malraux has not done so, because he persists in rejecting the Christian solution. But Malraux has come a long way, and he still represents what is best in our pagan world. The values he defends are those of the Christian heritage.

Though much can be said in disagreement with this vigorous critic, reading him is a stimulating experience which we look forward to repeating with his second volume, recently off the press.

—ALESSANDRO S. CRISAFULLI

The Catholic University of America

Gertrud von Le Fort (a dissertation). By Karel Hendrik Groensmit. Nijmegen.

For those not already familiar with the works of Gertrud von Le Fort this study offers an excellent introduction into the world of her ideas, ideals and art. Those who realize that we are living in two worlds—matter and spirit—a situation whose complexity often is not comprehended, will appreciate her ability to see and evaluate the visible and invisible at the same time and especially to detect the metaphysical forces of the universe. In poetry and historical novels she opens these gates to supernatural realities: self-effacing faith, religion, grace, motherhood, brotherhood, love, unity with God, vicarious sacrifice, even heroic death for the salvation of soul and the preservation of the dignity of man.

Mr. Groensmit's principal aim is to show the wealth and beauty in Gertrud von Le Fort's thought and style, which he does by emphasizing the symbolic character of events, names, acts and places in her novels. He classifies her correctly with Klopstock, Goethe, C. F. Meyer, Hölderlin,

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Nietzsche, but he reminds us that she is thoroughly independent nevertheless in maintaining this lofty position, though in her objectivity and personality she can be ranged with the neo-classicists.

There is, however, one thing missing in Mr. Groensmit's study: he seems unaware of the fact that Gertrud von Le Fort's novels are almost historical novels. Her stories take us to late Carolingian times, to the War of Investiture and the conflict between popes and emperors, to John Lackland (1199-1216) and his experiences on the continent, to Italy in the thirteenth century, to the Reformation and the Thirty

Years' War, to the French Revolution. It should be natural, this reviewer would think, for a modern critic to inquire into the sources of these historical settings to determine whether she has taken liberties with facts, how she has employed and interpreted them.

Otherwise, Mr. Groensmit's book shows mature judgment and careful analysis and documentation; a few imperfections, possibly merely due to the printer, in the German in which the dissertation is written, can be overlooked.

—PAUL G. GLEIS

Catholic University

Gabriela Mistral

(Continued from page 46)

IF ONE is asked, then, to summarize the influence of the Franciscan concept of life upon Gabriela Mistral, one can do no better than to quote the poetess' own words as they appear in the "Nocturne of Defeat" of *Tala*, her latest volume of verse. She acknowledges sorrowfully,

I have not been your St. Francis,
With kneeling body arched like a bow
Between earth and heaven, the symbol
Of the "Amen" of his soul's submissiveness.

It is an admission eloquent both in its clearly implied admiration for the Saint with whom, as we have seen, she has achieved certain features of resemblance, and in its awareness of a fundamental dissimilarity still existing between them—a difference which, as we have seen also, lies in St. Francis' mystic apprehension of God.

In conclusion, it is only fair to Mistral to point out that she herself has never shared the opinions of those of her critics who have sought to find in her poetry a mystical approach to God and to nature. On the contrary, she has on at least one occasion made personal admission of her inexperience of the mystical state. In a prose commentary upon one of the poems of Rabindranath Tagore, she addresses Christ, declaring, "I spoke to others of Thee, without having yet enjoyed Thee." Then she adds, in a sort of plea in self-justification, "Because of love, because of love's tendency toward exaggeration, I described what I shall never see," as if considering herself as one not destined to attain to mystical union. The statement is, however, one which serves a more important purpose, since it reveals implicitly but nevertheless clearly the true reason for the attraction St. Francis holds for her—a deep awareness and appreciation of spiritual beauty.

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